

Imagery, Technology, and Remote Adult Aboriginal Teacher Candidates:

A Brock University Pilot Project

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the relationship between imagery, technology, and remote adult Aboriginal teacher candidates through the computer software *Elluminate Live*. It focuses on the implications that the role imagery plays in third generation distance education with these learners and the new media associated therein. The thesis honours the Medicine Wheel teachings and is presented within this cyclical framework that reflects Indigenous philosophies and belief systems. In accordance, Sharing Circle as methodology is used to keep the research culturally grounded, and tenets of narrative inquiry further support the study. Results indicate there are strong connections to curricula enhanced with imagery—most notably a spiritual connection. Findings also reveal that identity associated to geographical location is significant, as are supportive networks. Third generation distance education, such as *Elluminate Live*, needs to be addressed before Aboriginal communities open the doors to all it encompasses, and although previous literature peers into various elements, this study delves into *why* the graphical interface resonates with members of these communities. Of utmost importance is the insight this thesis lends to the pedagogy that may possibly evoke a transformative learning process contributing to the success rate of Aboriginal learners and benefit Aboriginal communities as a whole.

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Chi'Miigwech

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	vi
 CHAPTER ONE: HONOURING THE MEDICINE WHEEL	 1
My Speak	2
My Connection	3
Background to the Problem	4
Elluminate Live Summary	7
Problem Statement	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Questions That Acted as My Guide	8
Rationale	8
Importance of Study	9
Remainder of the Document: Honouring the Medicine Wheel	16
 CHAPTER TWO: ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST TO VISION THE FUTURE: VISION AND AIR	 17
The Visual	18
Imagery as Cultural History	18
Voices From Across the Lands	18
Recognizing the Spirit Within	28
Meaning-Making Process	29
“The Medium Is the Message”	30
Advancing Technology and Its Role in Education	31
Across the Great Waters	34
Turtle Island	37
 CHAPTER THREE: SPIRIT-BASED RESEARCH: RELATIONSHIPS AND FIRE	 44
Anishnawbe’ Kwe	45
Culturalist Approach	45
Indigenous Methodologies	49
Narrative Inquiry	51
Elluminate Live pilot project: Collaborative works	54
Sharing Circle as Methodology	55
Elder	58
Participants	59
Data Collection: A Safe Place	61
Data Transcription	65
Member Check	66
Limitations	66
Striking a Harmonious Balance Between Data Collection and Analysis	67

Analysis Through Inductive/Deductive Eyes	68
Conclusion: Recognizing Two Worldviews	70
CHAPTER FOUR: KEEPING OUR TRADITIONS ALIVE: KNOWLEDGE AND WATER	71
What Is the Relationship Between Imagery Provided in the Curriculum and Adult Aboriginal Learners?	72
Does Imagery Impact the Adult Aboriginal Learners Sense of Identity?	72
Does using culturally aligned artwork provide a sense of balance with non-Aboriginal course material?	74
Does the Delivery Mode of the Images and Technical Aspect of <i>Elluminate Live</i> Act As a Barrier or Forge a New Pathway?	80
Technology as a barrier	81
Support Systems	88
Summary of Findings/Results	92
CHAPTER FIVE: COMING FULL CIRCLE: ACTION AND EARTH	95
Speaking to Coming Full Circle	96
Cultural Survival Through Spirituality and Adaptability: Stay Rooted or Sow New Seeds?	102
Sharing Circle Revisited	105
Recommendations	107
Further Research/Study	113
<i>Elluminate Live</i> and Brock University Now	114
Conclusion	116
References	119
Appendix A: Text of Harper's Residential Schools Apology	127
Appendix B: Coyote Goes to School	131

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Medicine Wheel Sunset Photograph by Tom Melham	14
2. Medicine Wheel based on traditional Anishinabe teachings	15
3. Totem poles	21
4. Pictograph on Buffalo Hide	22
5. Pictograph on Tipi	24
6. Petroglyph	26
7. Pictograph	27
8. Handprint	48
9. Salamander Art	75
10. Artwork of Hawk	79

CHAPTER ONE: HONOURING THE MEDICINE WHEEL

Boozhoo nindiwaynimaaginidok. Chi miigwechiwendam noongiizhgod. Lyn ndishnikaaz. Sagamok Anishnawbek ndoonjibaa. Anishnawbe'Kwe. Migizi N'dodem.

Greetings to all my relations. I am happy for today. My name is Lyn. I come from Sagamok Anishnawbek Territory. I am an Anishinabe woman (descendant from Ojibway bloodlines), Eagle Clan.

It is understood in my culture that each Being was given a voice no matter the size or stature he/she/it holds in this physical realm, as any one thing is no more significant than the next. This voice allows you to communicate from your own place of being and is your link and Oneness with the Spirit World. It is for this reason that when we are called upon to speak we honour and give thanks for this gift by first acknowledging the Spirit World before sounding our voice and bringing forth our message(s) and words. This custom is also to tell our brothers and sisters where we are from and our place within our Nation. There are many Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island, and despite there being similarities and fundamental truths among Aboriginal Peoples, it is understood that you acknowledge and pay respect to each distinct Nation and their teachings. Turtle Island is a term commonly used throughout Aboriginal communities for the North Americas. Throughout my works I will use Indigenous in the context of the original people of the land and Aboriginal as understood in the Canadian context of First Nation Peoples, Inuit and Métis. I will use these terms interchangeably as deemed appropriate, as I do on occasion speak to my brothers and sisters globally. In my writings I will also, where possible, make reference to any Aboriginal scholars' ancestral heritage to honour their own respective place(s).

I follow the tradition of my Peoples wherein I first present myself to the Creator through our Old Language and only upon acknowledging this Great Presence my speak may begin . . .

My Speak

One of my elder academic scholars, Dr. Eber Hampton, *Chickasaw Nation*, once shared the following words, during opening remarks at the 1999 Assembly of First Nations National Education Conference, *If education is the new buffalo then Internet technology is the new horse. We just don't know how to use it yet.*

(Hodson & Niemczyk, 2008, p. 2)

One of my elder artistic scholars, world renowned artist Norval Morrisseau, *Ojibway Nation*, once shared, *My paintings are icons, that is to say, they are images, which help focus on spiritual powers, generated by traditional belief and wisdom.*

(Morrisseau, n.d.)

This is a study born of these two thought processes. It is based upon Brock University initiating a computer-based distance education pilot project wherein the university licensed computer software *Elluminate Live* was to be used with Aboriginal Teacher Candidates (ATC). The ATC are currently enrolled in the program Bachelor of Education Primary/Junior (Aboriginal) offered at this institution and reside in remote northern communities. The study stems from the Aboriginal belief system being dependent upon the concept of relationships: reaching out, developing, nurturing, sustaining, and, yes, sometimes questioning relationships. In this instance the key players are ATC, *Elluminate Live*, imagery, identity, and technology. This study essentially seeks out the voices of the ATC and brings back their messages, correlating the graphical

interface and use of imagery that was employed in accordance with the medium in which the curricula were presented. This is the seed from which the study grew.

My Connection

I rise in the morning and greet the day in ceremony as my Ancestors did before me. Sage is burning in my smudge bowl, and in a smoky haze the sweet scent drifts throughout my home. This pleasant aroma awakens my Spirit and I say Chi'miigwech, Gitchii Manidoo—Many thanks, Great Spirit. I give thanks for another day, all creation, and acknowledge all directions that guide me during my time here on Mother Earth. I start my day in ceremonial prayer as this is the traditional way of my Peoples, the Anishnawbek.

Teachings that have been passed down to me tell that the Great Spirit created all: the two- and four-legged, the winged ones, the swimmers and crawlers, and plant life—all things. When the Creator gave breath to each and every life form, a unique essence was given, a special power and inner being, which became its soul energies and Spirit. The plant life was given growth, beauty, and medicines to heal. Rock weathers the storms and possesses knowledge, as our grandfather stones have been with us throughout the many years that have come and gone. Our animal friends were gifted with special traits and characteristics, which help their younger siblings, us humans, as we live our time in this world. The swimmers, winged ones, and crawlers too hold many lessons to teach us and hold their own rightful place as all creation is meant to fulfill a purpose or role during their time on Mother Earth. I live knowing this. My role is a visual storyteller.

In the years leading up to this study, I was employed at an Aboriginal Research Centre wherein I portrayed our culture through imagery to Aboriginal learners in our

communities as well as to the wider public. My ancestors and Spirit helpers were always there to guide me as my artwork is a small extension of our People's times and helps keep our culture alive and relevant. I carried this responsibility in my heart, and with each endeavour I would do so through ceremony asking for guidance. Memories, dreams, and visions beyond time and space were gifted to me, accompanied with a teaching or words to pass along. The visuals, stories, and teachings that the Spirits bestowed upon me are medicine I carry with me every-day.

I did not know at the time that some of the art I did was being done for the ATC who would become the participants in this very study. I did syllabi supplemented with imagery/art/graphics for the candidate's required courses as well as artwork for the pilot project *Elluminate Live* through Brock University.

This study speaks of the road I have been travelling while searching for truths that will help adult ATC within education and the academy. I must say that I do not intend to represent or speak for anyone else, as it too is understood in my culture that you can speak only for yourself to ensure that you do not silence any one of your brothers or sisters; this has always been our way.

Background to the Problem

A sacred fire burns; the flames call out to our People to come gather. After the falling of the first snow, it was always understood by the Anishnawbek Peoples as the time for the telling of stories. It was said that our Ancestors come back and visit us during the nights of the cold season to guide and watch over us. When the ground was blanketed in snow we told and retold our Truths as we understood them. This was our way; this was the way our culture kept breathing.

Oral Tradition

Aboriginal Peoples have always existed within oral traditions since the Creator brought us into being, and this was how we passed on our culture. The culture was experienced, lived, and transferred in song, prayer and sacred ceremonies and therefore, cannot be just translated into mere words. The Aboriginal People's word meant so much more, as this also was our connection to Spirit World: "Words did not merely represent meaning. They possessed the power to change reality itself" (Petrone, 1990, p. 10). Words were like the snowflakes, both gifts from Great Spirit, and fell softly from the sky throughout the teaching time.

Darkness Falls

The natural flow and light of the oral tradition was grossly interrupted by darkness. A night came crashing down and washed over the land in waves of sheer horror never experienced by our People before. This blackness encircled and consumed our People at will. Death: by innocence and an open heart. The darkness from across the Great Waters did not have the patience and strength of heart to form relations with all our brethren from all our nations but did have the monster within to ravage our communities; in doing so, it bled them dry of spirit and song. This darkness, this creature was also known as Assimilation introduced by the colonial experience.

Assimilation, you may have showed your face first, and upon making your true colours known you were closely followed by your brother Discrimination. Those who came and opposed the Original Peoples approach to life descended upon us in every means imaginable; thus, this translates into attempts to break us. The process consisted upon taming the "savage" physically, emotionally, mentally, and more notably—

spiritually. One stratagem that was employed which combined all these efforts was the educational/residential school system. This system discriminated against our whole way of living life and what we considered education. No longer was every aspect of life a teaching and learning experience; it would have to be captured solely by pens, papers, and written words. A text-laden pedagogy was discriminative against a holistic approach which is the Aboriginal way of acquiring knowledge (Archibald, *Stó:lo Nation*, 2008; Battiste, *Mi'kmaq Nation*, 1998; Hampton, *Chickasaw Nation*, 1998).

Discrimination, following decades of oppressing our People, you then chose to unleash the ills of your sister Victimization. After years of suffering many hurts, our Peoples finally lost a piece that makes us whole, our identity, thereby allowing us as a Peoples to be perceived as victims. Throughout the aforementioned tribulations, many of us lost our way; however, what we do know is what or whomever is lost has the potential to be found.

The Morning

We may be witnessing an awakening in adult Aboriginal education with the implementation of new technologies. Technology houses the capacity to represent a more holistic approach through offering a venue that encompasses educative techniques that draws on more than the proverbial reading and writing. One element that this includes is the use of imagery. Through computer software used in accordance with distance education, we are reaching Aboriginal students from remote communities and offering instruction and education within a different framework than the generic classroom setting. We now must tread softly on this new ground and be sure it is not a second wave of colonialism in disguise.

Illuminate Live Summary

Illuminate Live is essentially a web-based virtual environment that allows various forms of multimedia to interact simultaneously in real time. This type of software is a platform used by many in the e-learning profession as it primarily focuses on education and those who work in collaborative learning frameworks. It allows users to incorporate video, audio, static imagery, sharing of files, open chat rooms for discussion, as well as an area in which the written form still takes place. Having taken most elements of communicating into consideration, *Illuminate Live* thereby promotes an interactive space that would seemingly not inhibit openness in lines of communication. Despite the software being synchronous in nature, it also has the benefit of being recorded, allowing for viewership at a later time. During the years of 2001 to 2008, *Illuminate Live* has “served more than 300 million web-collaboration minutes to over 3 million teachers and students located in 185 different countries” (Illuminate Live, 2008, 3).

Problem Statement

Mainstream academia is saturated in text-laden pedagogy, and many adult Aboriginal learners have not been successful within this superstructure. Brock University licensed computer software *Illuminate Live* for a distance education pilot project which allows video, static images, interactive text, and audio to interact synchronously; all or combinations of these have the potential to possibly evade the text-mediated pedagogy. I will bring forth narratives of adult Aboriginal learners whose curricula have been enhanced with the above interface to explore whether this new model of distance education delivery resonates with these particular students. These narratives, with a primary focus on imagery, will offer greater insight as to whether or not implementing

Elluminate Live is beneficial to them as a tool of instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to seek out the role imagery plays in facilitating adult Aboriginal learners in the *Elluminate Live* pilot project. My search will also take into consideration the technological venue in which it was given.

Questions That Acted as My Guide

The overarching presence throughout:

1. What is the relationship between imagery provided in the curriculum and adult Aboriginal learners?

Looking further into links between the two:

2. Does imagery impact the adult Aboriginal learner's sense of identity?
3. Does using culturally aligned artwork provide a sense of balance with non-Aboriginal course material?
4. Does the delivery mode of the images and technical aspect of *Elluminate Live* act as a barrier or forge a new pathway?

Rationale

Imagery has always been an important aspect in Aboriginal life. Therefore educational realms need to acknowledge the significance this facet plays in instruction. It is a connection that speaks to and of our culture, enabling a mode of telling our past, engaging our everyday, and often foretelling our future. The Internet has also been a significant development in communicating and in educational spheres. Imagery-enhanced curricula that are culture specific may have the potential to further adult Aboriginal education in remote communities. Hence, effects of both imagery and Internet as a mode

of educational instruction must be addressed before it addresses us as Aboriginal Peoples.

Importance of Study

The Internet has become a major part of the greater populace's means of communicative and educational processes and is also finding its way into the homes of our Aboriginal communities for the same reasons. There is a gap in the literature that neither supports nor rejects the idea; thus the contribution to research will help fill the void, especially in a social cultural context.

Brock University has taken the initiative of a whole new concept in educative practices through licensing *Elluminate Live* and examining the outcome to see if it warrants further implementation or not. Presently Brock University uses WebCT for students to communicate amongst themselves and instructors as a supplement to many courses offered at the university. This mode of WebCT is solely text driven. It would then stand to reason that Brock University itself would too be interested in the results of this study. Having said this, Brock University, our Aboriginal communities, and researchers alike stand to benefit from this research.

Stemming from an Aboriginal researcher's epistemic belief system, this study may speak from a marginalized viewpoint; however I believe that this perspective is often overlooked in the research arena. Showing that there are Aboriginal researchers who wish to stay rooted in our inherent cultures, wishing to tell our own stories benefits not only researchers on a grander scale but a younger generation of Aboriginal scholars who will follow.

A/The Good Way

Throughout my works I will be making reference to "the good way." A/The good

way is a common term throughout Aboriginal communities that speaks to being respectful and mindful to all relations. I bring this to you, as I understand it through my teachings. What is understood and known as “a/the good way” is the Anishinabe Peoples way of saying all things should strive to be living in a connected and respectful relationship with one another.

This understanding is one of good relations-relations to and with all beings. All beings are kindred spirits since the time the Creator brought us all together, so now we must acknowledge all life and move forward with peace in our hearts and a calmness of the mind. “A good way” is not only words but also an experience each must have and a journey each must make on their own.

(Trudeau & Cherubini, 2010, p. 114)

It has been passed down to me that the Strong Standing People/Tree Spirits brought this teaching to our nation. Upon doing so it became part of their responsibility to remind us to heed this message. We need only to look around us to see them showing us to live in this manner. The trees can grow only in an honest way, in one way—in “the good way.” Our Standing relations are always reaching towards Father Sky, thus exemplifying that the Spirit World tells all beings that all paths done in “the good way” lead to Gitchii Manidoo.

I am not alone using this term and understanding as other Aboriginal scholars, Ball and Janyst, *Da'naxda'xe First Nation*, (2008) and Soleil, St.Denis, and Deer (2005) have either used “a/the good way” or presented their research in this manner as well. Notably, Elder Walter Linklater at an Aboriginal Education Summit in 2009 reflected, “The Elders are put on Earth to do teachings and teach people, so that we can learn to live

with one another in a good way It's always good to include spirituality and prayer in everything that you do. That's the teaching of our people." (Council of Ministers of Education, 2010, p. 2).

The Circle: "Power of the World"

Gitchii Manidoo has given us many teachings and stories from which to learn and base our lives. One of the most common beliefs among Aboriginal Peoples, regardless of Nation, is the circular motion in which all life flows. This concept is used as a standpoint to view self, society, and all interactions with all relations and realms. The following are words from Elder Black Elk, *Oglala Nation*, (1863-1950).

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round The Sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nest in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.

(Sutton, 2007, p. 346)

The cyclical principle is paramount in both Aboriginal cultures and nature itself. This is not surprising, as we are land-based Peoples with an emphasis primarily centered on Powers that control our natural environments, as eloquently indicated above. Therefore, there are a vast number of teachings with similarities that are told and retold with messages indicative of this pattern across Mother Earth.

Medicine Wheel Teachings

Although many Indigenous Nations have their own teachings exhibiting the circular archetype that consist of beliefs and values that parallel each other, there is a philosophy that I wish to bring forth, the Medicine Wheel teachings as understood within my nation. Before I do so, I must first acknowledge there are models that differ slightly from nation to nation and/or from one geographical location to another; as Annie Wenger-Nabigon (2010) stated, “There exists a range of presentations of differing concepts of the Medicine Wheel, by writers who are both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who have written with various purposes” p.141. Therefore, preceding my works I pay tribute to other Aboriginal scholars such as Wenger-Nabigon (2010), Nabigon, (*Oji-Cree*), and Mawhiney (1996), Hampton (*Chickasaw*, 1988), and Hodson (*Mohawk*, 2004)—this list certainly is not exhaustive—who have ventured throughout the academy using models and designs based on Medicine Wheel teachings from varying backgrounds. Because the Medicine Wheel teachings speak to a grander space than just research and education, I must mention that these teachings have been applied as guidance throughout all life’s journeys. Hence various fields too use the Medicine Wheel teachings as a guiding force within their works in areas such as psychology (Jones [*Ojibwa*], & Jones, 1996), restorative and social justice (Verniest, 2006), as well as health related issues (K. Wilson, 2003)—again this list is not exhaustive. As I mentioned earlier, there are extensive teachings and differing facets of the Medicine Wheel teachings and many models have been adapted and applied accordingly.

Having said this, all versions and teachings are an offshoot from our Ancestors’ original placement of Stone and Rock that was gifted to us from Gitchii Manidoo. Figure

1 is an image of an ancient ceremonial ground from which the Medicine Wheel teachings are thought to originate.

It is known amongst my People that we carry a medicine pouch. This is what we hold closest to our hearts, our values, and beliefs. This is why we call it medicine—it is a source of healing that nurtures and grows with us throughout all our years. One “medicine” I carry is the Medicine Wheel teachings. So upon saying this I will share one of my traditional teachings that have been passed down to me from my Ancestors.

The Anishinabe Medicine Wheel teaching, as it has been given to me, stems from the initial concept of wholeness and overall wellness that manifests in a cyclic formation that is divided into four equal vectors. Each vector is an aspect that works alongside the others for the completeness and well-being of the whole person, subject, or journey. It is based on the principle of four segments—individual and yet one whole (see Figure 2).

This particular teaching recalls that every human activity begins with a vision or an idea. If that vision is to become a reality, certain relationships must be established and certain knowledge must be gathered that are related to that vision.

Finally, the action stage is where activities undertaken are directly related to making the vision a reality, keeping in mind that this teaching always embraces our uniqueness, thereby including spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of the human lived experience. The Medicine Wheel teachings do not stop there but also encapsulate colours, directions, seasons and all other life cycles that help us to live and acknowledge “the good way.” However, for our purpose here we will speak only to the concepts presented in Figure 2, as to give voice to all would be too time-consuming and not as relevant to the research at hand. Also worth noting is that I did not make



Figure 1. Medicine Wheel Sunset Photograph by Tom Melham.

Open source—image credit states this photograph is listed as useable without permission and/or payment; however, must give credit to photographer. Copyright 2005 by Stanford SOLAR Center.

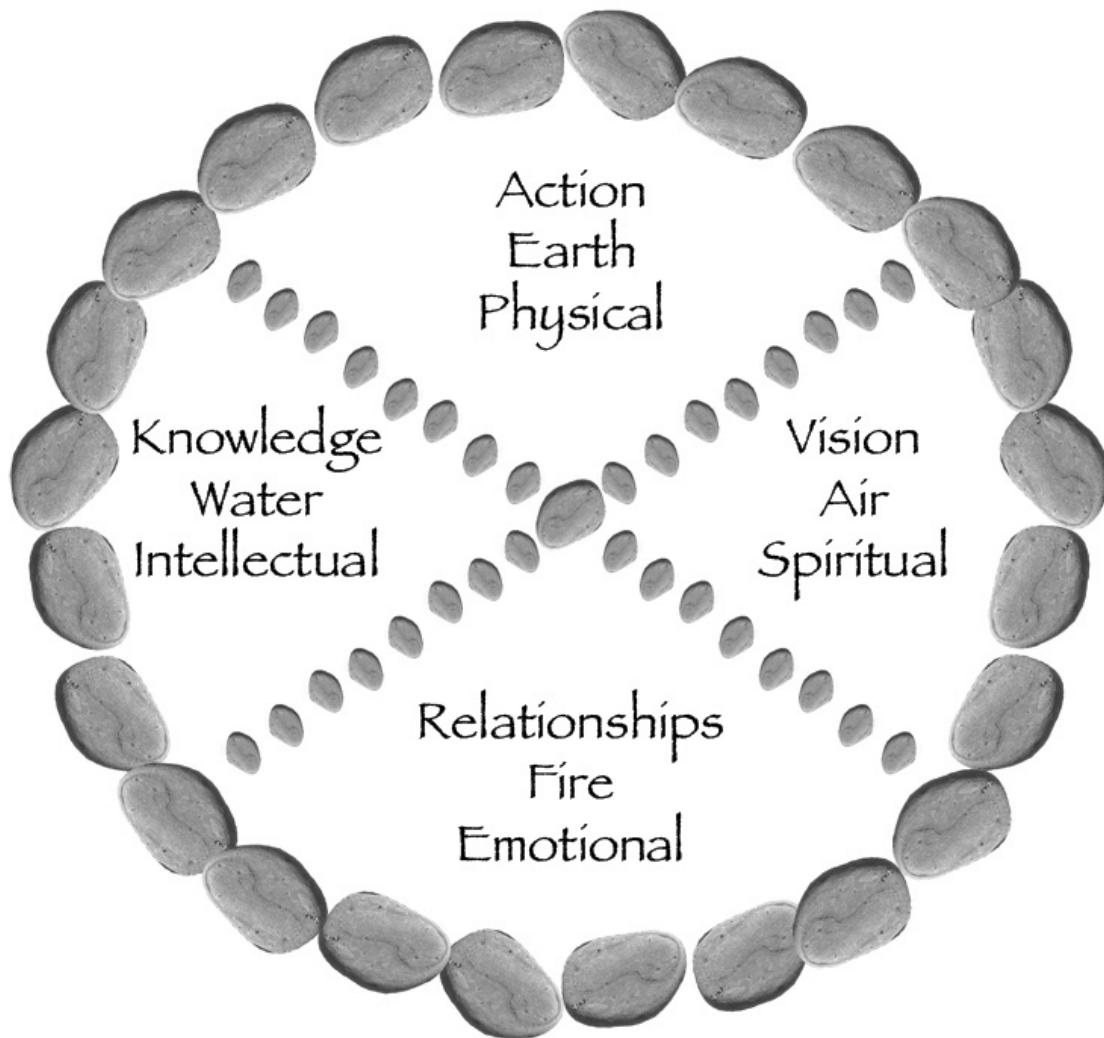


Figure 2. Medicine Wheel based on traditional Anishinabe teachings.

Illustration by Lyn Trudeau 2011. Used with permission.

the lines between each segment solid, as I have seen done in various illustrations, as the Anishinabe understood that each individual area bleeds and flows into other areas—individual, yet whole.

To honour the Medicine Wheel teachings, I will write and structure my thesis per chapter (beginning after the Introduction) in the same manner. I will speak to each specific component and apply the outlined concept to each chapter to further explain how I have applied these particular Medicine Wheel teachings to the unfolding chapters. I have chosen to add the elements related to each section to give you a further perspective into how I wove my thought process associated to my cultural understandings.

Remainder of the Document

Honouring the Medicine Wheel: Four Elements/Principles

Chapter Two, Literature Review—AIR/VISION. Air and Vision acknowledge our past, our Spiritual heritage, and associate imagery within a culture's own history. This chapter draws upon other relevant research associated to the topic—looking back so we can move forward.

Chapter Three, Methodology—FIRE/RELATIONSHIPS. Fire and Relationships traverse the paths used in this study, often ceremonial, to obtain and present results.

Chapter Four, Findings—WATER/KNOWLEDGE. Water and Knowledge discover the themes that flowed out of the collected data and identify these distinctions.

Chapter Five, Conclusion—EARTH/ACTION. Earth and Action bring us full circle, learning, reflecting, and taking what knowledge we have acquired and moving forward in “the good way.”

CHAPTER TWO: ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST TO VISION THE FUTURE: VISION AND AIR

VISION begins a journey. A vision is generally sought by offering tobacco for seeking answers or guidance through ceremony and prayer: a sacred time in which you are at one with the Spirits. A vision gives direction and acts like a beacon that you are meant to follow. Therefore, Vision is intrinsic to my thesis as a starting point in searching for truths that will help our Peoples in acquiring knowledge that will assist and further us, as Aboriginal Peoples, to a better place of being within the scope of educational purposes. Vision moves you forward and is the first step walking in “the good way.”

AIR is the connection of all Beings and realms: It is the very breath that enables all peoples to walk here upon Mother Earth. This element passes our prayers and givings of thanks to the skies above, either in the smoke rising from our ceremonies or by carrying our winged ones up high to pass along our words. It is also in the rustle of leaves as the winds whisper to us from all directions. It brings storms, changes seasons, clears grey skies to blue, and is a life force within every living entity. Therefore, Air is the originating source of my search as I first offered tobacco and asked for guidance at the onset of my works. This very element carried my words to Gitchii Manidoo.

It is with the above understanding that I undertake the literature review and forge ahead in my search/thesis as I acknowledge spiritual knowing, worldly studies, and authors/scholars who have come before me so that I might venture forth. However, with this particular study we must take a look into the role imagery and visual representation, symbolic and otherwise, have played throughout the lives of Indigenous Peoples before technology and the actual software used in the pilot project can be brought forth.

The Visual

Images in various forms have been in existence alongside all Mother Earth's peoples and creation before any text-based output; thus, images are considered the first form of writing. The visual portrayal has the ability to negotiate and attribute meaning to information when presented in this manner. Based on the aforementioned, images/pictures can be a communicative process and understood as reading the visual as text. The whole idea of making meaning from sources other than the verbal and textual classroom instruction must then be given thought if we, all Peoples, have this innate visual cue. It is because of this we must take into consideration how this applies to students within education and how it is being used within instruction to search out any implications due to this substantiated information.

Imagery as Cultural History

Peoples, respective to their own homelands, partook in keeping a record of their own histories and stories prior to shared colonial experiences and being fed the concept of the written word. The method primarily used was the oral tradition; however, alongside the oral tradition was the use of imagery and pictorial portrayals of important events and cultural teachings of these times. This was the first form of keeping a physical record or documentation of ancient cultures before the advent of scribal writing.

Voices From Across the Lands

Brothers and sisters from differing backgrounds and histories have left their cultural imprint across Mother Earth in various forms. As far back as 5000 years ago the Egyptians used hieroglyphs embedded on stone tablets and lining the walls of their temples and tombs. These hieroglyphs represent information via graphical figures such as animals, objects, and symbols. Consequently, this representation rings true for our

African relations who too have relied upon the Egyptian hieroglyph system—a practiced art of symbol/pictorial writing, also known as rock art, as this continent did not embrace script until Eurocentric colonization. The Indigenous Peoples of the Australian outback also used rock carvings and stone structures to implement a passage of information in the form of symbols and pictures as a means to preserve and tell their cultural history. It is well documented by many peoples' ancestors from diverse Nations and races as having used imagery as a means of passing on traditions and telling histories that would ground the customs of their own respective peoples. It would seem apparent that all peoples from old worlds felt compelled to preserve and tell of their times to the generations that would follow, regardless of whence they originated.

Turtle tells a story

My Ancestors here on Turtle Island have been passing on our own Native cultures and traditional knowledge through pictorial displays and art. The landscape itself literally tells the tales of our Peoples. There are stories and legends of this country's Aboriginal Peoples embedded in and upon the earth: images that are like children being cradled and nestled in our Mother, the Earth's arms.

Imagery in various forms has always communicated peoples' philosophies, ancestral knowledge, and cultural understandings that speak to the very belief structures of our present-day societies and communities. This is voiced across Turtle Island in song—a symphony of red clay, carvings, ochre, stone, and paints full of messages and stories left behind by our ancestors. There are many teachings in Aboriginal cultures that tell of the land, animal and plant life giving and sacrificing their Spirits to assist their

human brethren to pursue the “good way” thus assisting in preserving the very culture. It has been passed down that it takes all Spirits to give of themselves for all to survive.

Cedar Spirit

Our Aboriginal brothers and sisters along the west coast have long since carried on traditions of the totem poles. This is one way that exemplifies plant life holding old knowledge from long ago and keeping it alive for the western nations even today. Totem poles are large cedar trees with images carved directly onto them. The imagery associated with each totem pole represents a familial history and where the peoples of that geographic location place was within the community and/or nearby communities. In this case the art and image was a telling of family bloodlines and clans from certain areas and told of real and mythical stories of the local area in which it was situated. Totem poles are thought to possess the Spirit of the tree and thusly thought of as a sacred entity (see Figure 3).

Brother Buffalo

Brother Buffalo, too, has given of himself in the same fashion as Cedar, as the Blackfoot Nation of the Plains called upon the assistance of this great animal to record their histories through story robes and tipi designs. Story robes are pictorial journeys on Buffalo portraying special events of the year which would have been drawn on the back of a buffalo hide encapsulating important battles, ceremonies, and meaningful stories to be passed on. Over time, the story robe would become like a journal for the Blackfoot Peoples, the different parts of the story robe displaying their times (see Figure 4).

Stories were also drawn on tipi covers and liners. The stories would be drawn by people who had the story told to them or by people who experienced the story



Figure 3. Totem poles

Open source—Stanley Park: totem poles in Stanley Park, Vancouver. Photograph credit: Gunter Marx/Corbis. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*.

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/95449/Totem-poles-in-Stanley-Park-Vancouver>>x

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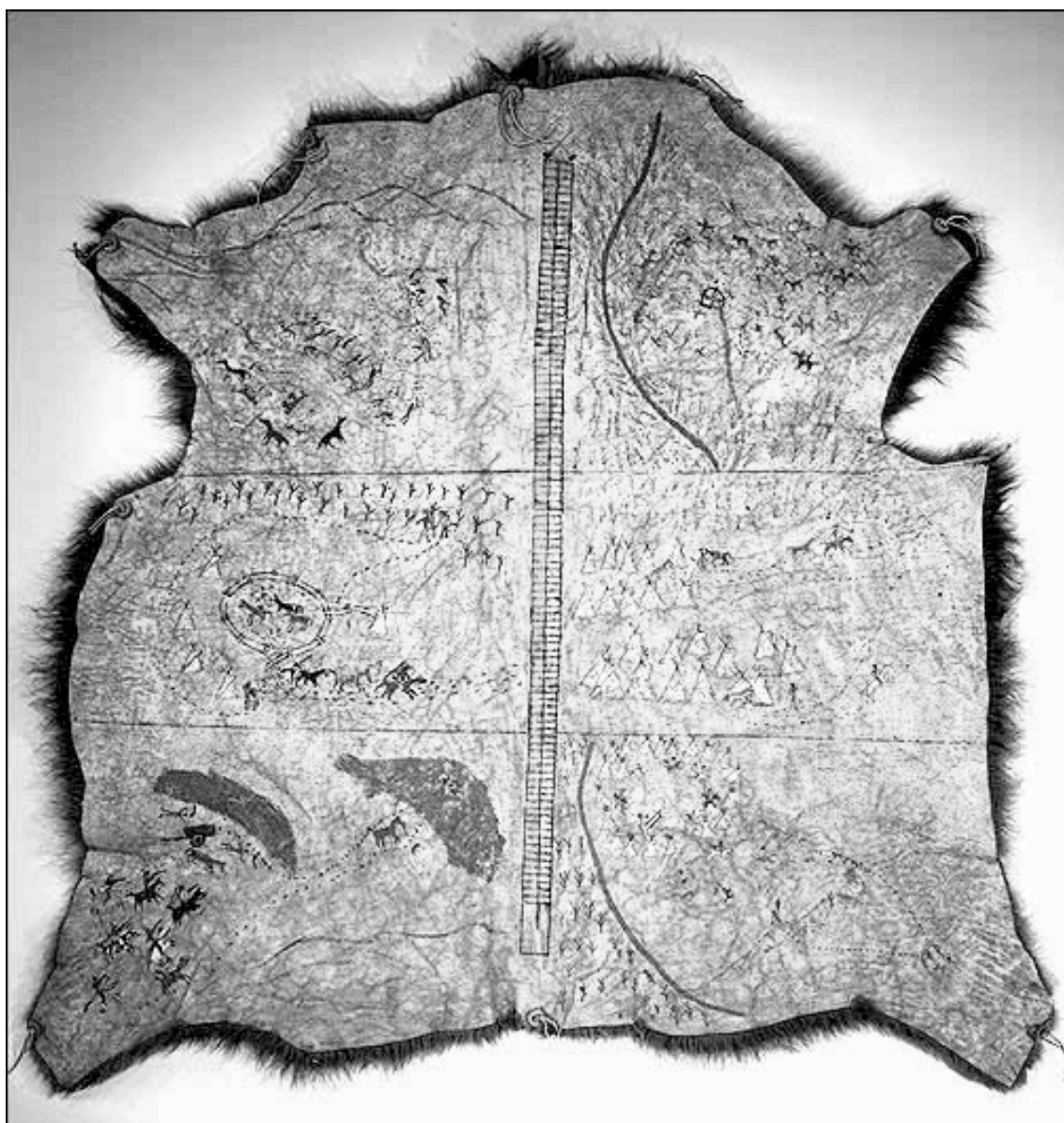


Figure 4. Pictograph on buffalo hide.

Three Chiefs Robe, Kainai, buffalo hide, paint, 65.94" x 62.99"
Collection of Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Canada, AF 1397 (1956). Copyright 2011 by Glenbow Museum. Used with permission.

themselves. The Blackfoot had rituals and ceremonies called Tipi transfers when it was time to make a new lodge. They would paint the design, and each image/symbol would carry meaning and represent a Spirit that protects and/or guides the ones housed within. The old tipi cover would have been left as an offering to Sun; this practice is no longer followed for fear of theft and subsequent sale. Some tipi coverings were and still are gifted to museums to keep the culture alive for the next generations to see authentic history recorded in its natural form according to the Glenbow museum in Calgary, Alberta, Canada (see Figure 5).

Grandfather Stone

Stone is one of our Grandfathers of the lands and also continues to speak to us from times of old. This unwavering Spirit has seen much pass before His eyes and weathered many storms. There are Anishinabe teachings that tell how this Grandfather with all His immense strength and longevity is an entity that passes on stories for us to hold on to and pass down throughout the generations to come. Here on our homelands, acting as our Guides, these Grandfathers never leave us, as they are situated in and amongst our Peoples in our daily lives and are part of the very land that we are privileged to live upon. Passing on our histories and knowledge is one facet of their responsibility. With respect to Stone's visual voice, I will first speak of petroglyphs, which are images literally incised in stone. These images are also referred to as Legend Writing and/or as The Rocks that Teach in some Anishinabe circles. Petroglyphs are much more than a physical impression; for Aboriginal Peoples petroglyphs are a connection and link to our pasts and a spirituality that has been gifted to our Nations. The carvings into Stone are found throughout Turtle Island, containing truths of our Ancestors who came before



Figure 5. Pictograph on Tipi

Tipi Covering. Glenbow Archives NA-668-8 (n.d.). Copyright 2011 by Glenbow Musuem. Used with permission.

and personally left their imprints for those of us today to learn, come to know, and heal from their old communities that lived in the old ways—a portal to old teachings and knowledge entrenched in “the good way.” Petroglyphs were left behind to say we were here and how we should carry on and the Spirits’ voices of those times are alive and are still speaking today. Figure 6 is a glimpse into the time when Aboriginal Peoples lived and celebrated their culture before the influence of the settler nations.

Throughout the many seasons that have come and gone, Stone has continued on and succeeded in preserving and sharing our cultures in various forms of creative arts that have stood the test of times. Another notable example is pictographs. Pictographs are akin to the petroglyph by way of Stone. The exception in this instance is using clay and drawings to illustrate the history of the pathways of our Peoples and how they navigated their way throughout Turtle Island. These images were beset upon Grandfather Stone in drawings and not carving into the land but illustrating on flat rock faces of cliffs of events occurring years long ago (see Figure 7).

These pictographs are also known as rock paintings and were created using red ochre, a mineral, that was mixed with animal oil as a binding agent: Another manifestation of our four-legged relations giving of themselves in the spirit of cultural survival. In keeping with the aforementioned, Aboriginal Peoples value visual representation/imagery a great deal as a communicative means within and for our cultures. It would then stand to reason that illustrative content possesses powers of significance and should not be taken lightly. As a result, this is further cause to pursue research and study into Aboriginal learners’ use and understanding of imagery in educational practices, especially when new media and technological advances are upon



Figure 6. Petroglyph

Open source—A petroglyph from Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, Alberta, Canada. Author D. Windrim. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Dwwos3.jpg>. Copyright 2010. Used with permission by CC-BY-SA-2.5.



Figure 7. Pictograph

Pictograph at Mazinaw Lake by photographer Nina de Villeneuve. Copyright 2004 . Used with permission.

our communities.

Reinforcing the deep-rooted connection between imagery and Aboriginal Peoples, I will speak to this association as it pertains to the works herein. This connection, as indicated below, has an innate place in Aboriginal People's lives.

Recognizing the Spirit Within

When you speak of relaying messages and teachings through image-based depictions, it is generally referred to as seeing with the eyes of Spirit in my cultural teachings. It is understood that often it is the Spiritual realm showing and guiding us through vision—it is a gift to share and carry these images to our Peoples and all our relations. I am not alone in this belief, as many of my Brothers and Sisters who are Aboriginal artists too have spoken of a link between the Spirit realm and our physical realities.

I transmit astral plane harmonies through my brushes into the physical plane. These otherworld colours are reflected in the alphabet of nature, a grammar in which the symbols are plants, animals, birds, fishes, earth and sky. I am merely a channel for the spirit to utilize, and it is needed by a spirit starved society. (Morrisseau, 2009, para. 3)

Those presenting our Aboriginal cultures in various visual formats have also voiced visual portrayal of our own stories that resonate with our spiritual Being that is imperative to our cultures as noted by such artists D. Odjig, , *Odawa-Potawatomi Nation* and A. Janvier, *Dene and Sauteaux Nations*. Therefore employing artworks and imagery within an academic setting for Aboriginal learners would seem logical as Aboriginal scholars (Hampton, *Chickasaw Nation*, 1998; Hodson, *Mohawk Nation*, 2004; Castellano,

Mohawk Nation, Davis and Lahache, 2001) have supported the position that Aboriginal Peoples view all aspects of experiential living as education. This holistic approach brought forth would then include old teachings, storytelling, image-based depictions, and include the spiritualness evoked through visual presentation.

Meaning-Making Process

In keeping with the above paragraph—what does this all mean in an educational/research context? So I will speak to the meaning-making process from an academic viewpoint. Jerome Seymour Bruner, a foundational theorist on meaning-making processes, was a man of vision. He saw beyond narrow-focused books and previous literature and envisioned the whole person's experience as "meaning." Bruner's academic career was rooted in psychology and, early in his studies, Bruner looked beyond behaviourist methods and was key in introducing thought processes contingent on the beliefs that one person's interpretations of lived realities were primarily based on meaning as opposed to direct stimuli. Bruner would incorporate new ideas with the, then, traditional understandings of the word and works involved with cognition. This *cognitive revolution* was a "revolution inspired by the conviction that the central concept of a human psychology is meaning and the processes and transactions involved in the construction of meanings" (Bruner, 1990, p. 33).

These ideas were groundbreaking in furthering how marginalized societies could find a new way and place to situate ourselves in the realm of social sciences, research, and education. Bruner's work was considered to be from a culturalist approach that meant an individual's whole experience was to be taken into consideration and not just what he/she had been trained to do in a behaviourist fashion (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006,

p. 76). He also brought forth the contention that the way individuals have lived and everything that surrounds them are the filters in which they understand and come to know and make sense of the world or information that is to be actualized.

The direct relationship here is that Aboriginal communities have their own distinct traditions, norms, and belief systems. Many Aboriginal communities are rooted in spirituality and ceremony and connectivity to the natural world. Having said this, to further understand the complexity of an adult Aboriginal learner is to be aware of “the concept of meaning and the processes by which meanings are created and negotiated within a community” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006, p.76). Therefore, for educators going into and/or interacting with Aboriginal learners, this is of the utmost importance.

“The Medium Is the Message”

I bring forth an element that also factors into this study as this research project involves using both imagery and advancing technologies: Imagery and *Elluminate Live* as medium.

“The medium is the message” is a statement coined by Marshall McLuhan (1964). The medium, as professed, by McLuhan affects how we perceive the content, and we must also take into consideration the medium’s role in and on society. This aspect of his work directly relates to the geographically distanced communities in this study because in recent years remote areas have begun to be exposed to globalized ideas. The main point here is the medium that is carrying these ideas and other models of doing, such as the one in question, an interactive mode of computer-based instruction.

An image as medium itself becomes the message, since imagery has strong ties embedded with Aboriginal histories as a means of presenting information. It is for this

reason that this medium may have a positive influence, as imagery of varying sorts has been in existence and was used as communicative means in Aboriginal societies long before exposure to the written word. As previously indicated, illustrative portrayals can also denote a spiritual quality, thereby an absolute effect on societies.

Advancing technology as medium is, too, one of the driving forces behind McLuhan's works. He purported that the actual medium should be the focal point of study and not the content. McLuhan was more interested in the form of the medium rather than content. Identifying and relating medium and message to imagery and *Illuminate Live* is necessary as noted by McLuhan & Lapham, 1994, in stating that "no medium has its meaning or existence alone, but only in constant interplay with other media" (p. 25).

Advancing Technology and Its Role in Education

Distance education consisting of varying media forms and outlets has been used in the schooling system for decades, and the mode too has seen changes as noted by Keegan: "Distance education, however, does not exist in a vacuum: it has been in action for over 100 years" (Keegan, 1994, p. 11). Keegan (1994) illustrates that distance education is not stagnant but is ever changing as new technology that would seemingly benefit learners becomes available. Along with this, a distinction must be made regarding distance education and e-learning. Scholars Schollosser and Simonson (2010) assert that distance education is "a generic, all-inclusive term used to refer to the physical separation of teachers and learners" (p. 129). However, as the two have been used interchangeably, e-learning is an emerging area that adds a new dimension to and in instructional spheres not previously used with the traditional means of distance education.

The new ICT (*e-learning*) offer a rich plethora of uses in learning/teaching processes far beyond the ability to transfer content of textbooks and lectures to students at a distance. In fact, none of the ICT uses denotes the physical separation of the learner from the teacher at any stage of the study process. (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005, p. 471)

Soren Niper (1989), in what is now considered a classic analysis, identified three generations of distance education: The first was correspondence teaching; the second was multi-media teaching which introduced integration of print with broadcast media (namely video), cassette tapes, and to some degree computers; and the third generation was identified with new interactive communication technologies (ICT). It seems apparent that mainstream educational institutions are in the midst of the third generation as it sweeps across colleges, universities, and other organizations worldwide. ICT advances have made a central presence in modern-day educational practices and warrant it necessary to look into this area and the elements of such practices, especially as it is already being incorporated into the learning environment. Pedagogue Unsworth, (2006) even warns that “reconceptualizing literacy and literacy education needs to account for the role of images (as well as other modes of meaning-making) in paper (hard copy) and electronic media texts” (p. 55). This third generation is proving evidence of a profound paradigmatic shift in education. Hence, the need for more recent scholars to clarify an absolute need to distinguish e-learning as its own mode of educating in its entirety. However, the program under study had been receiving learning from a distance through the second generation phase, and for the first time students were experiencing e-learning, so I have used terminology reflective of both so as not to distract the reader. While making the

distinction between distance education and e-learning, please understand and use all references of the two, for my purpose, synonymously.

Paradigmatic shifts in education: Indigenous Peoples re/act

Despite the lengthy literature on distance and online education being done in mainstream contexts, I will be drawing only from literature dealing with computer-mediated instruction with adult learners and situated within Indigenous cultures. I do not do so out of disrespect for any nation or studies already done, but my focus herein is based on how this specific subject relates to adult Aboriginal Peoples in particular.

I must first acknowledge the fact that from a Canadian Aboriginal perspective we are not alone in our colonized experience. Indigenous Peoples worldwide also have lived realities of forced assimilation practices with effects that are still a destructive force in their communities. One stratagem used by dominant forces in the assimilation processes was implementing a required educational component which deviated from an Aboriginal cultural backdrop. In many instances children were taken from their homes without consent from the family and were subject to various abuses. This, without a doubt, has been the source paired with culture clash where mistrust and often fear of educational institutions began. A shared history such as the aforementioned has left many of the Indigenous populace scarred and broken. This brokenness has bled into the generations that followed, hence allowing for suspicion and Indigenous communities becoming wary of formal education in any form. Below are a few differing Indigenous perspectives that bring forth studies that have explored the phenomenon of advancing technologies that may assist in calming the turbulent waters between adult Aboriginal learners and advancing educational practices.

Across the Great Waters

Australian Indigenous Peoples

Our relations from Australia have too seen the necessity to study advancing technology as it continues to change the landscape of education and their Indigenous population learners' participation. Acknowledging differing epistemic belief systems existing between their Original Peoples and the colonizer and how they view and interpret new technologies, our Australian brethren have been investigating this area since the 1990s and early 2000s. Because of their studies, recommendations for designs and models in which to conduct ICT within distance education have been made. Scholars (Dyson, 2003; George, 1992; Grant, 1996) have produced models and reflected upon segments that must be identified and implemented to engage Indigenous learners within a university setting. Now we must first recognize that the originating Peoples of Australia are of a nomadic background, thus this facet may play a role in engaging an Indigenous learner within the confines of education. Conversely, it is for this reason that it is thought that education at a distance may benefit the learner.

Since the onset of their investigative research, definitive features were thoroughly brought forth. The dominating characteristics focus was on communication, interaction (graphical and otherwise), and flexibility. The most notable characteristic within the research stemming from our brothers down under is the fact that they are from the standpoint of bringing their Indigenous populace within a shared online learning domain with the rest of the general public as opposed to first having them situated in an environment dedicated to them. The primary focal point is cultural inclusiveness; hence the idea of bringing this population into the fold of an existing educational institution.

Dyson (2003) from Sydney, Australia within the Faculty of Information Technology surmised that the Indigenous space online should consist of student constructed meaning, live and static communicative tools, file sharing, reflective journal, news, resources and frequently asked questions (p. 558).

Although there is research delving into ICT distance education; I found research lacking on the imagery aspect alone. Imagery/graphical interface has been identified as one of the elements that need consideration, yet no studies that I could come across dealt with this specifically. If it is an area that needs to be addressed, it would best suit Aboriginal learner's and educator's needs to know why the graphical interface is relevant. This relevancy is pertinent if educators are going to be using imagery in combination with other educational practices through distance learning.

New Zealand's Maori

Most interesting I found of our Pacific kin, the Maori, is first mentioning the closely related belief and value systems within their lifestyle compared with Aboriginal Peoples of Canada in terms of the learning process. Their cultural approach to learning eerily mirrors the holistic approach that our brothers and sisters here in Canada have been trying to implement into educational systems for decades.

They like working in groups; prefer a holistic approach to learning incorporating all four dimensions of the person—wairua (spiritual), hinengaro (intellectual), tinana (physical) and whatumanawa (emotional), like face-to-face contact and discussion, and like their learning to be related to real-life tasks.

(Leach & Zepke, 2002)

Please revisit Medicine Wheel teachings, Chapter One.

Maori Peoples have too experienced similar realities of assimilation strategies as many colonists under the British Empire and other dominant forces throughout the course of the last century and beyond. These processes were so destructive and culturally damaging that ripple effects still flow across Mother Earth's Indigenous populace. Maori researchers and educationalists alike have acknowledged the desire and absolute need to change the educational terrain to better respond to their People's needs to further themselves when entering into this realm. Maori scholar Graham Smith (1987) has been a driving force behind bringing Maori pedagogy awareness to mainstream publics in New Zealand since the late 1980s. His main ideas, although not exhaustive in this list, mainly consist of: Indigenous Peoples theorizing for themselves, healing the divide between the academe and Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous Peoples validating their own knowledge based on their cultured principles within an educative context. The efforts therein have resulted in pedagogical practices reflecting Maori culture and approaches to cross-culturally apply them to (in this case) distance education.

In terms of seeking out best distance education praxis involving New Zealand's Indigenous population with new technologies, Leach and Zepke (2002) have undertaken a study in which they collaboratively worked with cultural advisors inquiring into best distance learning applications for Maori adult learners. The learners were situated in degree programs within a university setting from remote communities. I find this most suitable as the Maori learners they refer to literally paralleled the teacher candidates' disposition in my study. As it stands in engaging the adult Indigenous learner populace is to namely continue to use "intermediate technology" or as previously indicated as second generation because "Internet delivery is not considered because face-to-face interactive

facilities are not yet available to most of our learners” (p. 311) as noted by Leach and Zepke.

The research project was based on three humanist constructs, the first being that adults are self-directed and autonomous learners, second, experiential learning, and the third construct critical reflection (Leach and Zepke, 2002). These constructs were then supported by reframing models built on theories of Graham Smith (1987) as noted above.

The study produced a wariness of embracing the “high technologies” due to servitude, differing epistemologies, and cultural belief systems. Also, within the whole scope of their research, imagery was again identified as a factor, but they did not offer any explanatory reasons as to why this is. Conclusive of this study is the honest statement, “Our attempt at cross-cultural partnership is in its infancy” (Leach & Zepke, 2002, p. 319). It would seem, then, Maori learners are still on the cusp of distance learning via the Internet sphere and still warrant further discourse.

Turtle Island

Canada’s Original Peoples

Here in Canada, Aboriginal Peoples have struggled with cultural recognition, and one of the places in which it has been evident is within the educational sphere, much like the stories previously shared. The history of education in Canadian Aboriginal communities beholds a dark history to say the least. There has been a long history of Aboriginal communities having mistrust with allowing educators and researchers into our communities, namely due to previously having been taken advantage of and treated as less than equal throughout our histories. Within the last century, Aboriginal people of these lands have faced great extremes in the name of assimilation and to forego our

natural-born identity. I feel a significant source of this is the residential schooling system, which would provide evidence to this; yet, to explore this topic coupled with colonialism goes beyond the scope of this research study. Please see reports/works associated to this topic such as Assembly of First Nations (1994), Battiste (1998), Jaine (1993), and Miller (1996)—to mention only a few. However, I think it necessary to include a quote to give the context of the belief behind residential schooling systems and those within Canadian government who allowed the atrocities to occur:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem ... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department. (Titley, 1986, p. 50)

Whole Peoples condensed to one word, “problem,” rather than fellow thinking and feeling Beings. These were the words said by Scott, who was head of the Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932. It is ideology of this sort in Canada’s governments that spawned fear, anger, and frustration amongst my brothers and sisters. To further give acknowledgement that this in fact was the belief and actions of the government is Prime Minister Harper’s (2008) apology for injustices that were done (please see Appendix A). Since the stone of colonialism was thrown into our waters, ripple effects of this occurrence still reverberate throughout our lands, hence making education and research into our communities often a difficult task. It is because of the aforementioned that Aboriginal Peoples in Canada feel it necessary to ground education and research within the construct of a Native-centric framework.

We are now in a time that situates Aboriginal communities to receive educational instruction through venues that have the power to take into consideration an all-sensory

approach through distance education that was not available in the past; I feel this is where our concentration needs to be. It is due to the initiatives, such as Brock University's, that we can all look forward—taking and acknowledging the discrepancies of years gone by but not dwelling in such negativity. Looking forward technology wise, Aboriginal scholar Yvonne Poitras Pratt (2010) stated, “While much of the literature in this specialized area concentrates on Aboriginal involvement in radio and, more recently, television, far less attention has been paid to Aboriginal use of information and communication technologies (ICTs)” (p. 2). Pratt continued, “However, a tangible trend is emerging wherein Aboriginal people are seen as exercising greater control over new media forms and reclaiming and defining their own cultural parameters” (p.2). These cultural parameters bleed into the education realm as well.

Hampton, *Chickasaw Nation* (1998), who was a traditional scholarly forefather, began to introduce the complexities of new technologies, internet included, and the Aboriginal community, followed more recently by authors such as Burgess (2010), Davis (2000), Pratt (2010), Facey (2001), Hodson (2004), and Zimmerman, Zimmerman and Bruguier (2000), all of whom have previously done research studies into e-learning and the Aboriginal learner. These scholars have taken the initiative to venture into the new digital landscape of education within this populace. Available technology, access to technology, ability to relate within this dimension, and finding one's self were identified as the most significant in the literature of their studies.

The first prominent factor to be addressed is servitude regarding new technologies and access associated to it. Our homeland is vast, and our Aboriginal communities are often geographically isolated, so it is not surprising that this is an issue. It is because

remote communities are at great distances from urban centers that they are not granted the same technological connections as the greater populace. In most cases the actual physical lines of communication simply were and sometimes still are not available to these areas or at least not as up to date as the rest of the public. Cora Voyageur (2001), in her research on technology and isolated Aboriginal communities, concluded that “least available technologies included e-mail, modem, voice mail, computer networking, electronic bulletin boards, and the Internet” (p. 111). The initial structuring of systems was the first barrier, coupled with the cost associated to establishing connections that would allow advances such as Internet connectivity. Neil Burgess (2010), who had done research with Canada’s most northern Indigenous population, the Inuit, concluded, “Although development of an infrastructure and network was a long standing barrier, an even greater stumbling block is the cost of satellite bandwidth, estimated at roughly 100 times that of a typical home broadband connection” (p. 2). Conversely, within the same research scope Burgess noted, “Face to face interaction was noted to be the most favourable delivery mode for workshops and courses, but given average travel costs of \$4,000 CDN per individual – a seldom occurrence” (p. 6). It would then seem apparent that despite Inuit adult learners preferring in-person instruction, the notion of e-learning must be explored as the physical presence too was not practical for their local communities. These higher costs associated with any outside educational instruction would inevitably pose financial issues as Aboriginal communities tend to fall below poverty levels, thus, making technological advances a challenge and yet a necessary move in this direction.

Aboriginal communities studied have been those in remote areas, separated from

the rest of dominating societies; therefore it seems evident that the imagery that each community would be exposed to would vary immensely. Again, imagery and graphical interface are indicated as a source of importance, but no one overtly gives voice to this aspect. This propels me to further imagery as a stand-alone aspect warranting further study as it has been, on more than one occasion and across borders, identified as a key factor with no account as to why and how it affects students using e-learning techniques and technology. New advancing technologies and imagery throughout every discourse we live not only affect how we live but also how we learn. Therefore, as these aspects have been isolated as key factors in Aboriginal education on the Internet, they necessitate further study.

Other studies have used other initiatives involving various software; however, for this research study we will be looking into distance education software *Elluminate Live* as the means of instruction with adult Aboriginal learners. The following research involving this software and imagery has not appeared in any literature associated to adult Aboriginal learning; thus this study will hopefully not only isolate the gap but also bring insight and contribute to the literature. *Elluminate Live* has been employed in various educational institutions and, as stated in the Introduction, has already having served millions. This number is impressive given the length of time it has been operational.

Elluminate Live

Elluminate Live: A new breed of advancing technology. This software is widely used throughout the world for web-conferencing and virtual meetings within various contexts; however, for the purpose of this study we will look at its impact within an educational institutional environment.

Elluminate Live is an innovative mode of delivering education and instruction. As previously indicated (see Introduction, Chapter One), this software employs many techniques and instrumental tools for distance education that were not available prior to on-line learning realities. This software offers a new paradigm for learning and teaching students. Below is a definition as given by the company and how they perceive and represent their software product:

Elluminate Live!® is a world-class, real-time training, demonstration and collaboration environment that is powerful, flexible, and easy to use. Elluminate's collaboration environment enables the delivery of live, online learning, training, coaching, mentoring, and meeting. Effectiveness is increased by engaging participants with the ability to talk over the Internet, exchange text messages, display live video, share whiteboards, multimedia files, and applications—all in one intuitive, graphical interface. Whether the environment is hosted by Elluminate or installed on your server, it is easy to set up, easy to use, and customizable. Unlike the Internet, Elluminate Live! is built specifically for live, multimedia collaboration. Our unique Collaborative Communications Framework (CCF) automatically ensures that everything is in the right place at the right time. Whether you have a dial-up modem or a high-speed LAN, you get the same superior quality, high performance, and dependability—with no lag time or garbled communication. So you can focus on content, not technology.

(Elluminate Live, 2011, para.1)

Elluminate Live, itself, sees benefits in weaving their technological software into our communities. *Elluminate Live* stated in their top 10 benefits of using their product for

educational purposes that their software “provides a multi-dimensional, flexible environment that suits the learning style of First Nation students” (Elluminate Live, 2010, para. 5).

CHAPTER THREE: SPIRIT-BASED RESEARCH: RELATIONSHIPS AND FIRE

RELATIONSHIPS sow and nurture the seed of Vision. It is within establishing good and respectful relations that provide an environment enabling Vision to not only flourish with culture and traditions but also to establish new pathways with our brethren of the academy. The connection between methodology and relationships is imperative as it opens doors and asks all who will participate to be mindful and tend to respectful research relations. Relationships are the link and interactivity between all entities and are based on reaching out and connecting to all those involved, participant and researcher alike. Upon doing this, information-gathering gives voice and expression shared by all those who partake in the good way.

FIRE is a life-giver. It reaches out with all its warmth to embrace the Peoples and feed the Spirit. Gathering at the circle of flames is a sacred moment within an Aboriginal setting; it is here that we welcome all our brothers and sisters regardless of race or ethnic background to be at one within the greater Circle. In accordance with my thesis work, Fire plays a significant role by way of giving life to the Teacher Candidates' stories and roles as situated within this pilot project; their narratives are key in seeking answers that directly affect these and future distant Aboriginal learners. As with all fires, it is ignited by a spark; in this case the spark or Vision was Brock University taking the initiative to employ computer software *Elluminate Live* that may better meet the needs of our Aboriginal learners. Voices that may never have been heard now burn brightly across a digital landscape.

Anishnawbe' Kwe

I often sit and drum and sing with my hand drum to listen to Spirit Wind whisper words of Old knowledge and for messages to feed my Spirit. In doing so I know that following and being mindful of my Ancestors' teachings and the good way, I must align my research endeavours accordingly; therefore, I choose to take a culturalist approach when undertaking a research project. In doing so, I reach for a methodology that will attempt to sate Aboriginal needs as well as those of the academy. I feel in order to stay true to my inherent self and not lose myself to mainstream research ideologies, I must always remember to keep and embrace my traditions even when walking through research projects. Maintaining my cultural identity is crucial in keeping a perspective that empowers Aboriginal Peoples. Future research rests on this as a basis for prospective Aboriginal scholars to continue to build on, as I have done with Aboriginal scholars who have walked the academic path before me. Wholistic awareness, self-reflection, and my traditional Anishinabe knowledge are essentially what I have to offer the ever-expanding sphere of Indigenous methodologies.

A qualitative culturalist approach guided the Sharing Circle methodology, while tenets of narrative inquiry further supported this study. All information presented received clearance from Brock University, Research Ethics Board, file number 09-276.

Culturalist Approach

The principal idea behind a culturally related approach is that society/communities and one's own culture frame cognition. The acquired knowledge through epistemic belief systems, traditions, and values form identity and essentially become the lens for viewing the world and thinking processes. Theorists throughout the

decades have either employed this practice and/or have been a proponent to further their works while, as it is known in my culture, staying true to self (Dewey, 1967/1987; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Graveline *Metis/Cree*, 2000; Wilson, *Opaskwayak Cree*, 2008). This approach takes into account the whole individual in attempting to understand cognitive processes as well as, notably, what has influenced and affected these experiences.

There is a connection between societal values and how these values bleed into every aspect of how we live our lives, including research circles. The culturalist approach encourages researchers to first look inwards before acting outwards, thus bringing awareness and acknowledgement to all races, classes, and gender while providing researches rich in content by a vast array of authors who choose to self-identify.

Metis/Cree scholar Graveline spoke to this concept as well, calling it cultural-locatedness. She too always self-identifies and believes that you should not speak to things you do not fully understand or are knowledgeable about in terms of Aboriginal culture; to do so is not being mindful of our ancestral ways. “To Elders only those who Experienced an Event are Empowered to Speak about it,” and “Only those who Are Aboriginal can speak about Being Aboriginal” (2000, p. 362).

The following excerpt will also give voice to why identifying who we inherently are as Aboriginal researchers is so important.

When talking or writing, we usually expect others to make the same jumps in logic, to follow the same patterns of communication and to have similar terms of reference. The reader must be able to comprehend the writer’s beliefs in order to see what the writer sees. When this is not happening, miscommunication is inevitable (S. Wilson, *Opaskwayak Cree*, 2008, pp. 6–7).

It is only when the reader can understand or at least be aware of the different worldview that both reader and author can make sense of the information being presented. Having self-identified within the text leaves less room for fear of misinterpretation and misunderstanding, just as I have done at the beginning of my thesis.

This approach asks you to question, take action, and determine your own position in research spheres. It brings those of the marginalized populace to a place where they can be included in conversations that affect all: Inclusion, not exclusion.

The idea of inclusion, not exclusion I liken to the hand (see Figure 8).

The hand possesses the power to physically enact the intellect, heart, and voice of the ongoing conversations in research circles. Hand in its whole constitutes all fingers, thumb, and the palm. The palm is the center of the hand, which is the largest part and is representative of the dominant populace or superstructures that are within the greater research domain. The fingers/thumb must stand individually, yet work alongside and rely on the palm while residing at the outset; therefore, these extremities represent the marginalized peoples. However, they are necessary to make a fully functioning hand, so with this in mind the whole hand works/functions best when all fingers/thumbs and palm are present and work jointly as one cohesive union. In the realm of research, if we are to serve all Peoples, then all must be allowed to participate in the action of grasping new and old knowledges as well as playing a role in the implementation for all communities. (Trudeau, 2010.)

There are many ancient handprints across Mother Earth today from ancestors of varying genealogy and, as indicated by Kimball, (n.d.), “We know from ethnographic analogies and decades long research that the handprint literally means kinship” (p. 15).



Figure 8. Handprint

Adapted from photograph. Copyright 2004 by Photographer Lyn Trudeau. Used with permission.

This hand, this kinship will make room for a culturalist approach which is now permeating the academic world. It is thanks to all the scholars, Aboriginal and otherwise marginal, having the strength of spirit to hold on to their own epistemologies and those of the academy that welcomes varying perspectives.

I acknowledge my past, my traditions, and my whole culture, as I believe experience informs one's own methodology, thus applying the notion of experientialism and allowing all aspects of humanness into research.

Indigenous Methodologies

Aboriginal scholars have written to these experiences; one example depicted through a story shared from author Heather Harris is a tale of Coyote (see Appendix B). It is in this story that Harris sets out to illustrate through Coyote's eyes how we, Aboriginal people, encounter frustration and confusion as he discovers those that do not have the experience, traditional knowledge of Aboriginal people, or know firsthand the strife and barriers faced by so many of our peoples and yet instruct and lead the way of these understandings.

In some cases, such as universities per Coyote's story, there are "White Humans" who claim to be and present themselves as experts on Aboriginal culture, thereby speaking for them and, through this process, silencing this portion of the populace. According to theorist Paolo Freire (1970), when something of this magnitude happens in a society, the subjugated, in this instance Aboriginal Peoples, must try to find balance and reassert themselves in a world that does not genuinely understand the belief system in which they can and do exist. They become the oppressed and must try to bridge the dichotomy of these two worlds—oppressed and the oppressor. If a fragment of the greater

dominion is muted, misrepresented, or not represented at all, they stand a greater chance of failing to succeed when called upon to participate accordingly within the superstructure on which that society is built.

In research that is being done today, Original Peoples of this land are writing and doing research that stems from a holistic Aboriginal epistemic belief system. “Circular Flowing Integrative Honoring Interconnectedness of All Balancing Mental Spiritual Emotional Physical Dimensions” (Graveline, 2000, p. 364). She is not alone in her plight of incorporating traditional Aboriginal knowledge in works and inquiry that are being done. Others from Aboriginal ancestry follow this path as well (Hampton, *Chickasaw Nation*, 1998; Hodson, *Mohawk*, 2004; S. Wilson, *Opaskwayak Cree* 2008).

Furthering Aboriginal research that would include Aboriginal researchers and working collaboratively with non-Aboriginals relies on a mutual respect between subject matter and those doing the studying and understanding that Aboriginal researchers now wish to use their own methodologies and ways of knowing in the research arena.

As proponents of a holistic view of our worlds, Indigenous scholars may recognize the holistic approach to oppression that is evident in all of the ways that Indigenous peoples are held down by research and the dominant view of knowledge and the world is upheld. It is time for Indigenous peoples and Indigenous research to break free from the hegemony of the dominant system, into a place where we are deciding our own research agendas. (S. Wilson, *Opaskwayak Cree*, 2008, p. 17)

The main idea of establishing Aboriginal researchers doing Aboriginal research is from our own culture’s perspective and worldview, as one of our own foundational

theorists, Hampton, had pointed out “cultures have ways of thought, learning, teaching, and communicating that are different from, but just as valid as, those of white cultures” (1998, p. 28). Hampton had voiced this in the early years of Aboriginal scholars taking on the responsibility of doing our own studies and works in the world of academe.

Research should not solely be an experience that transcends oppressive behaviours but more a journey of seeking knowledge that showcases the beauty of all peoples within the populace. It is the research and results and what is done in actualizing the outcomes of such that change oppressive behaviours and bring awareness in order for all to move forward with better understandings of researches undertaken. Thereby not focusing only on the problematic areas but solutions that are respectful to all peoples.

Aboriginal research practices have a ceremonial facet and it is for this reason that Aboriginal researchers fear an appropriation of sorts by those that do not understand or are not aware of this aspect. Ceremony is spiritual and should be respected and done so out of mindfulness to and for those who hold this sacredness as part of their very lives.

Narrative Inquiry

I used narrative inquiry to further support the structure of my thesis as it has tenets of the Sharing Circle process. I will proceed to make the connections as I bring forth narrative inquiry as it applies to the research at hand and is comparable to Indigenous methodologies as stories transcend all cultures and time. In this respect it further supports this research study as narrative inquiry gives credence to the way individuals and people as a whole make meaning of their lives or lived experiences as narratives. I also find this method of inquiry fitting, in this instance for Aboriginal Peoples, as Bell (2002) noted, “Canagarajah (1996) argues that narratives function in

opposition to elitist scholarly discourses and that their use in research offers an opportunity for marginalised groups to participate in knowledge construction in the academy” (p. 209).

A telling of stories tends to come to mind when the topic and the issue of “narratives” come up, and this has been around since the beginning of man and is the basis of Aboriginal Peoples’ oral history; however, narratives as inquiry became known in educational research only in the past three decades, as Clandinin and Connelly are known for bringing it forth in this field (Bell, 2002.) Since then there has been a vast array of narratives employed in this field, with new works and models still being developed and used within educational and research studies.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2002), narrative inquiry is an understanding of “narrative as both phenomena under study and method of study” (p. 4) which is loosely guided by questions. This is too how the Sharing Circle method took place. Each participant responded only as he or she felt like sharing and was not probed but rather shared and told his or her story and truths in regard to their experience.

We must understand precisely that there is a difference between storytelling and narratives—if we are to understand narratives as research. Storytelling is a significant component of Aboriginal culture as we pass on our culture through teachings and relaying messages, most often using metaphor as a means of communicating these lessons; storytelling generally has predetermined themes. Storytelling is conveying events often embellished with the accompaniment of sounds and images. It is often repeated verbatim and arrived to by way of phrases that have been accumulated per se, through hearing and telling stories; thus, a story is designed to evoke an emotional response.

Narratives become the whole of the participants sharing stories that do not have a predetermined theme but simply stating and telling what they know and their experience; hence the narratives derived throughout the research process. Narrative inquiry has the researcher(s) collecting the individual stories as told to the researcher(s) or gathered through field texts. The participants of this study shared collectively in the circle, yet each one was heard as their own person and each story respected in its own right. Telling of stories thereby becoming the narratives offers the research and reader a more localized version of the phenomenon being studied, individual stories, and a more concrete situatedness.

In accordance with the above, narrative inquiry moves away from outsider research to insider, thereby allowing the participants' voices to be heard as opposed to grand-scale theorizing. This then brings forth narratives as an approach to share an experience to help better understand a larger problem or to shed light to the topic under study. Along with this, namely of significance is that the subject(s) and author/researcher work collaboratively. The circle has all participants sharing and branching off or adding to what had been said by a previous participant. This collaborating further means that the inquirer actively involves the participant as the inquiry unfolds, allowing it to become personal. This aspect of narrative research is drawn from foundational theorist John Dewey (1967/1987) who attests that an individual experience is a central lens to understand persons who are involved or affected by the phenomenon that is being studied, thus giving greater insight to the phenomenon itself.

In the essence of research, narratives then become the themes that are pulled out

and explored after the fact. It is also more centered on experience in particular and in this research the adult Aboriginal learners learning through a computer-based medium as a means of instruction focusing on imagery.

Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (Clandinin, Pushor, D. & Murray Orr, 2007, p. 22)

In this way, we can listen to the teacher candidates first hand and relay their story/narrative in which to view the results and understand the phenomena on a personal level.

Illuminate Live pilot project: Collaborative works

This research study was part of a larger project involving Brock University's Faculty of Education, Information Technology Services (ITS), Centre for Teaching, Learning and Educational Technologies (CTLET), and Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research & Education. This was the collaborative research team that undertook the

overall research of the *Illuminate Live* pilot project. The pilot project consisted of various methods employed by the research team throughout the duration of the study including surveys, interviews, and sharing circles and was decided beforehand by the collaborative team. The collaborative works mentioned focused on the human resources aspect in regards to the cost and role of the university and key players within this context. A working paper to this effect was presented at the American Educational Research Association in 2010. Subsequently, no other published works resulted from the research with this project. However, I primarily wanted to focus on the adult learners and how *Illuminate Live* affected them. My thesis and data associated therein are drawn solely from the Sharing Circle in which I played a role assisting the facilitation of the circle.

Sharing Circle as Methodology

On the Sharing Circle, an elder scholar that has come before me shared:

Traditionally a Sacred ceremony

a Gift from the Ancestors.

A physical reality

a Metaphysical experience.

An egalitarian structure

each voice acknowledged

heard in turn.

To choose words with care and thoughtfulness

is to speak in a Sacred manner.

We can each have our own Voice

speak our own Truth.

In circle all participants are encouraged to Be

Self-reflective

Culturally located.

To Listen Respectfully to Others

Provides another lens to view our own Reality.

(Fyre Jean Graveline, *Metis/Cree*, 2000, (p. 364)

As previously mentioned on my Peoples belief that we carry a medicine pouch. Another “medicine” I carry is the knowledge of sharing circles and their teachings and the power it has when used and thus determines my personal philosophy of research. I walked into this study carrying this culturally rooted belief system that in turn influences my outlook on research. Upon saying this, I will share one of my traditional teachings passed down to me from my Ancestors. In accordance with the beautiful piece above I will give to you my understanding of how the Sharing Circle came to my Nation, an Anishinabe teaching as told by Lyn Trudeau:

Long ago when land was still young, air sweet and Spirit voices strong, we were given the gift of the sharing circle by Eagle. It was the time of the year for the young women to go and fill their baskets with berries; however, grandmother was no longer strong enough for the long walks and strain on her back. Grandmother stayed behind to tend the young ones. Upon having settled the young ones for an afternoon sleep she heard a commotion from the treetops just outside the lodging. The fuss Raven and Magpie cause when each does not listen to the other but engages in loud argument! The quarreling from these two got quite animated in flight and each, not paying attention, did not see their sacred brother Eagle flying nearby. During the scuffle Eagle’s tail got

tangled in the squabble and a feather began falling to the ground. Raven, being keen of eye, saw this and immediately swooped down and grabbed the feather just before it landed on the soft soil below. Raven and Magpie were embarrassed and apologetic, as Eagle is to be held with utmost respect. Ashamed Raven apologized for his behaviour that had begun with being loud and not listening to Magpie. Magpie was sorry and too asked for forgiveness. Eagle observed with wise eyes as Raven passed the feather to Magpie to hand to Eagle, as now each spoke only when the other was not speaking.

Eagle noticed that grandmother, peering up from the ground below, too had watched with learning in her heart. Raven was then told by Eagle to pass the sacred feather to grandmother so that she might adorn it with beads and carry it with her to the council fires to teach what she had witnessed here today. She will pass this on to help our two-legged relations come to peace with themselves and each other.

This story was passed to me so that I might carry it, pass and teach what I have learned in my heart. The sharing circle has been adapted into many Aboriginal communities and is also symbolic of the Medicine Wheel. It is a safe place wherein everyone can speak their truths and all persons are respectful of each other's time to speak. Every one who sits in the circle is on an equal level, as in life where no one is born without reason and purpose. We also follow our winged friends' example that gave us this understanding and speak only when the talking feather is passed to us. It is only then that we speak and, when finished, pass it gently to our brother or sister to our left and attentively listen as they too were mindful of this. The sharing circle is a nurturing facet of many Aboriginal cultures and is acknowledged as a source of healing. Chi'miigwech Migizi. Many thanks Eagle.

The works presented here are based solely on the sharing circle in which I participated in because I have been taught that you cannot speak to other circles. In fact, I will later touch on this in Chapter Five regarding my unease and concern when using the Sharing Circle for data collection.

Elder

An Elder is a spiritual leader within Aboriginal communities. Our Elders are revered for staying rooted in our old knowledges and ceremonies, passing on these shared memories of the Peoples before us to the next generations that will follow. It is for this reason they are seen as the connection to our cultural teachings and ceremonies and have the role to give strength through teaching and guiding communities spiritually. Elders use their gifts to heal and maintain a holistic wellness amongst the Peoples, thus providing continuity of the very culture. For this I give thanks. Miigwech Manidoo Giimaas. Thank you Spirit Leaders.

An Elder has been given this significant role in Aboriginal culture, so I feel this element should not be kept out of the academic realm as it too has its rightful place in everything we do and that which affects Aboriginal Peoples.

I prepared my offering of semaa (tobacco) in advance to ask an Elder to oversee the Sharing Circle. This was done as tobacco is one of the medicines used in ceremony and is traditional practice in many Aboriginal communities to present to a person(s) when asking for something or giving thanks. This is one of the Anishinabe practices, so I honour this.

I sat on the grassy lawn beside the Elder, and while we were enjoying Sun shining outside the university I offered the Elder my tobacco tie. Upon receiving my gift

the Elder listened carefully and considered my words for what I was doing regarding the research project and our teacher candidates. I was pleased to hear that it was readily accepted and even more so when the Elder expressed happiness that I chose to include them and continue to adhere to culture protocol and to keep ceremonial traditions within my scholarly work. They also included that it was a pleasure because this involvement would be a good opportunity to see how traditional ways can be kept alive even outside our communities. In keeping with the Sharing Circle teaching, an Elder can be understood as Grandmother, overseeing and observing the circle.

Participants

The participants were adult Aboriginal teacher candidates enrolled in the first cohort of the Bachelor of Education Primary/Junior (Aboriginal) program offered through Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research & Education at Brock University. The program is centered on community and cultural relevancy. It is modeled to address the needs and unique situations/realities of Aboriginal learners. The course is for the duration of 5 years and further readies these teacher candidates to be instructors for elementary grades kindergarten to 6.

The program incorporates Aboriginal learning preferences and cultural diversity. This community-based curriculum model relies on qualified local Aboriginal educators to facilitate the learner's educational journey. Courses are offered in a facilitated learning cohort model, face-to-face or online. Successful graduates will receive a Bachelor of Education degree. Upon successful completion of a teacher education program, teacher candidates are normally recommended to the Ontario College of Teachers for membership and to receive their Ontario Certificate of

Qualification. (Brock University, n.d., para. 1)

All participants were preparing for their fifth and final year of the program. The anticipated date of completion is summer 2012. Up until now they received their instruction as what has been identified in the literature as second generation. This was their first experience using third generation technology in terms of educational instruction.

An invitation was sent out by the primary research pilot project team to the whole cohort; however, of the teacher candidates initially contacted three responded and took part in the Sharing Circle. Initially one might understand this to be a negative but as Bell (2002) noted per narrative inquiry,

The time commitment required makes it unsuitable for work with a large number of participants. It also requires close collaboration with participants and a recognition that the constructed narrative and subsequent analysis illuminates the researcher as much as the participant. (p. 210)

Due to the beginning of the statement, I felt we were able to capture and allow participants to speak freely and at length without their feeling that they were infringing on anyone else. When dealing with a larger number within a Sharing Circle format, a researcher may be able to achieve only a glimpse of each respondent's story or answer as the researcher(s) may not be able to ask all questions they had intended as the participants often lead the way. I too feel it necessary, with the latter part of the statement, to reiterate the necessity of Aboriginal Peoples doing Aboriginal research as it leaves less room for misinterpretation.

Those who responded were all women over the age of 30 from Nishnawbe Aski

Nation (NAN). NAN represents 49 First Nation communities from northern Ontario, Canada. It is an organization that is both political and territorial that leads these communities to local self-determination within governance systems. The women were from two separate remote communities, and each had limited training with computer usage.

The women were given pseudonyms to protect their identities, as they were promised a level of anonymity within the research process. The first woman, Anne, was the only one in the cohort from the community where she lived and used satellite to connect to the internet. Her internet connectivity had no local support as the local community did not have internet systems in play, so she had to rely on the university's support network for assistance. The other women, Dotty and Chrissy, resided in the same community and were the only ones of the cohort from this community. They said they were connected to the internet by cable connectivity and, too, had no internet support in their community.

These teacher candidates were mature, with families and were working in their own communities' classrooms. Their reality consisted of trying to schedule times around working in the classroom in accordance with the scheduled times with the hours of the instruction given online from the *Illuminate Live* pilot project. They often had to use the resources available in their schools as the hours of instruction were during the work week.

Data Collection: A Safe Place

The participants in this study had journeyed from their own territories to attend summer classes at Brock University, thereby even making the Sharing Circle possible and the primary source used for collecting data. We were able to hold these gatherings at

the university's residence where the participants stayed to accommodate the participants as much as possible. Not only was it a comfortable environment as this was literally their home away home for the duration of classes, but also the women partaking in the Circle had support nearby if they so required it, as an Elder sat amongst us. This set the tone of a cultured backdrop, and the participants at the onset of the Circle welcomed this as we smudged and offered our prayers and thanks to Gitchii Manidoo.

We all sat in a collective circle, and the relaxed and inviting atmosphere made it easier for the teacher candidates to open up and share their stories. Through this process I was able to take the whole person's lived experience into account. I was always aware and mindful of our Emotional, Physical, Mental and Spiritual wellness throughout the course of the entire Circle process.

The smoke wandered amongst us and our words throughout our time spent together in the Circle. We too shared food and drink, which is a customary practice of a gathering within Aboriginal settings when certain ceremonial events take place; this was no different. This allowed for a mutual chord of conversation to happen as we progressed in this traditional manner. Having approached the participants in a way in which they were familiar and trusted, we were then able to begin.

The following are questions that were asked, or closely related, as they came out within the Circle: (please note that the numbered questions were those that were prepared in advance by the collaborative research team; I however, broke these down to more relatable questions for our participants, and these questions are indented under the initial question. These then loosely guided the Sharing Circle as the participants often spoke freely and were not probed or pushed to share.

1. Under what conditions is it worthwhile to use synchronous technologies to provide education to Aboriginal adult learners?

- Do you think art and being taught with visual aids helps with your academic progression?

- Has this technology helped establish and/or maintain relationships, or did it further a disconnect between teacher and student?

2. To what extent were First Nations learners in the four distance courses offered to date able to learn and maintain their sense of identity through these distance technologies?

- Were you able to keep a true sense of self? And did the graphics and images help maintain this?

- Does imagery make a difference and benefit you at all in an academic setting?

3. To what extent do the real-time, oral, and visual aspects of learning through the Elluminate Live CMS, course materials, facilitation strategies, support, and Sakai components meet the learning and identity needs of these adult learners?

- Does imagery and graphical interface that is culturally appropriate assist in engaging you as a student?

- Do you think using artwork that is culturally aligned provide a sense of balance with non-Indigenous course material?

- Do you see imagery as spiritually related? If yes, expand ...

4. What are the major structural, pedagogical, and cultural challenges to the implementation of a culturally aligned distance education model in a dual-mode mainstream university at the Stage 1 level of sustaining distance training?

- What are your overall thoughts on the graphic treatment in the program through E Live?

- Is there a level of comfort because of the Native artwork incorporated in the lesson plan?

- Do colours embedded in imagery mean or resonate anything for you?

- Are there any recommendations regarding using imagery for future instructors?

Please note that the questions above loosely guided the circle as often the teacher candidates led the way in which the circle went. Also, during the time of the circle, emotions were freely shown and unashamedly shared, somber and humourous alike.

The Sharing Circle was digitally audio-recorded to be further analyzed. The digital recording was on a device called ZOOM Handy Recorder H4 (H4). This type of recording tool is ideal for a circle as it has microphones built in that reach out in all directions to gather information from a 360 degree input, this as opposed to the usual 180 degree angles for which other equipment such as tape recorders have the capacity; therefore, the clarity of voices was enhanced and easier for transcribing, as the H4 filtered noise pollution outside the voices. Having the session recorded in this format allowed the team to simply download the session onto a computer, save, and then transcribe.

After the Circle had convened, Dotty asked if they could have a closing Circle to honour their time spent at Brock University with us, and we agreed to facilitate it. It was a good feeling knowing that they respected and felt comfortable with us to ask us to gather with them once more. Relationships flourish when approached and done in the good way. Miigwech teacher candidates.

Data Transcription

After all the data were collected, and as previously noted this study was situated within a greater research venture, therefore the non-Aboriginal Research Assistant attached to the overall pilot project transcribed the data; however, I do think it worth mentioning that I reread and transcribed the parts that were in the participants' original language. Since the participants hail from NAN, which culturally is very similar to my Nation and the languages spoken there are Cree, Ojicree, and Ojibway, I was able to translate to English. I rewrote the transcriptions, adding all the new information which otherwise would have simply been left out. I also found that portions of sentences were literally changed to a formal academic manner; I changed these back to the original form in which they were given. The following is an example: "... it just *ordered me* off or just-- our laptops are getting out of date" as opposed to the original, "... it just *booted me* off or just, [pause], *our computers*, [pause], our laptops are getting out of date."

Transforming spoken language into a written text is now taken quite seriously because thoughtful investigators no longer assume the transparency of language. Qualitative researchers now ask themselves how detailed transcriptions should be. How, for example, could they best capture the rhythm—Should they include silences, false starts, emphases, nonlexicals like "uhm," discourse markers like "y'know" or "so," overlapping speech, and other signs of listener participation in the narrative? These seemingly mundane choices of what to include and how to arrange and display the text have serious implications for how a reader will understand the narrative. (Riessman, 1993 p. 12)

I wanted to capture and stay true to the participant voices as much as possible. I

saw no reason to change someone's words or omit words, as it may change the context within the whole dialogue. I also did not want the Aboriginal participants, when they read their transcription, to be made to feel less than adequate and/or to think they lacked the capacity to speak clearly and concisely in respect to their own experiences. I felt it of the utmost importance to honour all of the participants' voices as they were given.

Member Check

In accordance with the above and with its collaboration between subject/researcher under subtitle Narrative Inquiry, the researcher actively involves the participant as the inquiry unfolds as much as possible. This collaboration tends to create negotiation of the relationship between the researcher and the participant to lessen the potential gap between narrative told and narrative reported. Therefore, to further perpetuate this understanding and engage the teacher candidates in the narrative process, a member check was also done. This meant that following the transcribing of the data, the transcriptions were sent out to the participants, allowing them to check for accuracy of their shared words and to add/clarify or take anything out if they so chose and ultimately allowed the participant to even opt out altogether. These actions assisted in the validity of the narratives shared within the Circle.

Limitations

The limitations of this research study are that adult Aboriginal learners often have an innate sense of distrust of educational institutions and researchers and thus do not readily offer of themselves to speak to their experiences for fear of repercussions. This may be what the case has been with this specific cohort that was approached. There were nine students invited, while three chose to participate. Now this is not to say the data

collected and words shared were of any lesser value because the whole group did not share.

On a side note, I first and foremost wish to honour and bring forth the strength the participants' voices carry; however, as this work is supported by narrative inquiry, I have woven myself into this conversation. I am now concerned with how the study is being presented in such a way that I question: Does the narrative remain with the participants or has it now become mine?

Striking a Harmonious Balance Between Data Collection and Analysis

This section of my thesis was most difficult to do. The unit of analysis was the Sharing Circle as it was also the primary source of the research conducted. I have respect for the academy and wished to relay this information that comes from my Peoples in a good way; therefore, I wanted to analyze the data within a framework that would be deemed acceptable and yet remain culturally appropriate. To mechanically separate words that were shared in a sacred moment and to be coded and dissected and categorized in order to replicate what had already been generously shared in a traditional manner is such a contradiction. I questioned myself from a traditional perspective, researcher and scholar. Is this ethical to my People as it pertains to keeping our cultural teachings intact? How do I strive for an academic balance that will sate the academy's criteria for research analysis while maintaining the integrity of my original teachings? I struggled with this.

I then relaxed for the moment upon remembering: "No clear steps that described how to do narrative inquiry analysis, " and "The lack of formal analytic steps allows for a

freedom and flexibility of data analysis that may be lost when using other methods” (Maple & Edwards, 2009, p. 39).

Through my troubled thoughts I awaken again through narrative inquiry, “steering clear of mining the data for themes and the danger this has to depersonalize and decontextualize the stories from the participant” (Maple & Edwards, 2009, p. 35). If I were to follow in the footsteps of coding and pulling apart words to input into computer-generated software, I felt I would steal from the integrity and sacredness of the sharing circle. I needed to find a compromise wherein I was able to let the voices speak in the same spiritualness in which they were given. I needed to first do ceremony, immerse myself in the data, thence interpreting and gathering a deeper understanding of what the participants were saying. In this regard I did see various areas emerging. These areas presented themselves and gave way to the information that must be spoken to.

Analysis Through Inductive/Deductive Eyes

When inductive and deductive methods come together as one it can be interpreted to that of a circle. Trochim, 2000, noted that both methods often are used in social research and, in fact, research frequently involving both processes is done in a circular sort of way. These two can intermingle and cross paths at different stages, as there is constant content analysis.

Inductive

I initially chose to use an inductive method for analysis. “Qualitative researchers use an inductive method. Data are collected relevant to some topic and are grouped into appropriate and meaningful categories; explanations emerge from the data themselves” (Dominick & Wimmer, 2003, p. 111). Inductive analysis is understood to be more

exploratory and is often referred to as “bottom up” in research circles. It begins with specifics to a general scope.

I tried to keep the transcription intact as much as possible while copying and pasting sections and excerpts into different files that had subsequent data that were similar to compile into one thread. I was fortunate to have the audio recordings as well as the word document saved on the computer. Listening and rereading, I was able to go back and situate myself to the place of the Circle and even see the participants as we had gathered. I then labeled the new files accordingly and named the theme as closely as it related to the excerpts therein.

Observing: which consisted of the Sharing Circle where I listened and heard the stories being shared. The pattern: categories emerging. Tentative hypothesis: giving name to emergent trends. Theory: interpreting and making sense of words shared. The inductive approach brought me to a place that left me feeling as if leaving the works here was still too open-ended and full of uncertainty—I felt as though it was not yet complete; therefore the analysis progressed to deductive.

Deductive

Deductive analysis is the opposite of inductive, therefore often referred to as “top down” approach and begins with the general bringing it to specific confirmation. What was missing? Did I feel I was not analytical enough? I revisited the data and stories:

Theory: bringing it back to the premise and reason for the whole study;
hypothesis: What were the reasons and what was it the research was seeking;
observation: reflecting on the themes that came out of the data; confirmation: while using the overarching questions that guided my research, I used this greater umbrella to

coordinate and put them under, thus becoming the answers that I initially sought for each question.

Analytical Circle

Medicine Wheel, Sharing Circle ... *everything an Indian does ... and so it is in everything where power moves* (Introduction, Chapter One).

This fluid movement of data and using both analysis approaches I felt captured more of an Aboriginal approach and perspective as well as using methods within the academy's research processes. Thus, a joint construction of meaning was reached based on stories and words shared.

Conclusion: Recognizing Two Worldviews

Aboriginal research methodologies are relevant today and can play a significant role in the whole realm of research, servicing Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers alike for the betterment of all. When room in the academy is made for differing perspectives and modes of doing, such as traditional Aboriginal ways, successes for our Peoples will ensue. This acceptance will also be providing a greater chance for all to further themselves in society as a whole. Aboriginal scholars continue to be active participants in writing and contributing to research and are able to do it within their own culturally appropriate ways and sharing of a different worldview and knowledges associated therein. When everyone comes together to unite in a respectful way (this does not mean letting go of one's own belief systems and cultural values) and pursue ventures that benefit all of the populace, anything is attainable and within our reach.

CHAPTER FOUR: KEEPING OUR TRADITIONS ALIVE: KNOWLEDGE AND WATER

KNOWLEDGE is rooted in the culture and represents growth of “the good way”; knowledge essentially keeps our culture alive. This facet of the Medicine Wheel is the keeper of our Ancestral ways of knowing and is vital in passing on the very culture itself from one generation to the next. Knowledge in Aboriginal circles does not necessarily mean learned academic skills, but all knowledge that supports and nourishes us throughout all our lives—that being spiritual, emotional, as well as physical. Knowledge in the context of my thesis is acknowledging our People’s ways of knowing in contemporary times and the new paths they must walk in order to garner academic skills and strike a harmonious balance within the two in order to accomplish this. This is more evident now in the age of new technology as it becomes more prominent within the realm of distance education. It is applied in this case through the acquired data to assist in bettering adult Aboriginal learners and for Brock University as well as all stakeholders within this pilot project.

WATER is the Rain that falls from the Blue Beyond and is flowing throughout our great Mother Earth. It is good medicine and essential to life itself. It is cleansing and purifying and often brings us to a new place of Being—a better understanding per se. Thus, the information gathered and acknowledged herein brings forth and carries our messages of cultural needs and stories to all who have an open heart to hear our struggles, our plight, and joyousness of our culture to apply in instructional means that resonate with Aboriginal Peoples. Water pertains to these works by way of discovering the themes that flowed out of the collective sharing. Upon hearing the teacher candidates speak, I can

then give voice to their stories and experiences in this findings/results chapter. It is this lucid motion of Water that allows us to fluidly move into the Action stages of research.

What Is the Relationship Between Imagery Provided in the Curriculum and Adult Aboriginal Learners?

I feel I must bring forth the driving force behind my thesis, the overarching question stated above, as this began our journey. We all enter into a relationship of sorts with everything and everyone we encounter: interconnectedness. Imagery as a concept and medium would then be no different. As this question was too grand to simply ask, supporting questions further looked into it as indicated in *questions that acted as my guide* (please see Introduction, Chapter One). The themes that resulted from the inquiry seemingly spoke to each individual question and thus are presented in this manner as way of answers sought. The imagery provided throughout the pilot project on *Illuminate Live* was created and culturally appropriate with the exception of one occasion, which will be spoken to later in the chapter.

The intimacy of the Sharing Circle provided for a comfortable feeling and togetherness that allowed for the participants to look inside themselves and share their stories. So we smudged, we sat and we spoke in turn.

Does Imagery Impact the Adult Aboriginal Learners' Sense of Identity?

Imagery is a valuable resource and is used every day in everybody's life. The visual presentation is a social and collective process within all societies. Thus the use of this resource in education was asked of the Aboriginal teacher candidates in regard to how it strengthens, influences, or/and supports their sense of identity in this learning environment.

Reflection of self

When asked, “Did the graphics and images that were used throughout the discourse of the program help you in any way?” all readily agreed. Their shared opinion was that Aboriginal representation in this way was appropriate and good as it made the work more approachable as well as indicating how this resonated within them.

Anne: “It reinforces your sense of identity, you know, it gives you a sense of pride, something to connect to.”

Dotty: “Yeah.”

Chrissy: “It doesn’t change who I am, but it does help me.”

Anne’s statement carries so much weight, showing the power of imagery and how it can move and affect someone on a personal level. Illustrative portrayals designed in a culturally aligned manner supported the distinctiveness of Anne as an Aboriginal person. Providing a “sense of pride” is something I personally have never heard from an Aboriginal person, regardless of age, when discussing curriculum or education in general. None of the literature spoke to imagery providing this emotive presence, and it was refreshing to hear this being voiced. She further relates that it gave her “something to connect to” that she seemingly was not previously getting through the curriculum. All united on this front, and Chrissy later continued that through this means there is a “Connection to the Land.”

The imagery provided impressed an elemental connection to the land and is significant in this context as Aboriginal Peoples are a land-based culture. Aboriginal Peoples relate to their lands and natural world that surrounds them, and these excerpts attest the “something to connect to” and “connection” are the land and territory an

Aboriginal Person belongs to. This is a substantiated facet when discussing Aboriginal identity, as this is a characteristic that helps hold our culture together and is the part that makes us whole.

The teacher candidates addressed identity through artwork that was culturally specific, and this flowed into the next major follow-up question, which brought forth a unique element: Spirituality. Indeed imagery is more powerful than anticipated.

Does Using Culturally Aligned Artwork Provide a Sense of Balance With Non-Aboriginal Course Material?

Finding Spirit in Imagery

The one time a non-Aboriginal instructor provided the imagery for a session on *Illuminate Live* was an area the students considered troubling. Despite a certain level of complacency voiced regarding the imagery that was used, one image in particular made an absolute difference (see Figure 9).

The participants were relatively low key until this point. When they brought this forth, all seem compelled to share.

They “really didn’t like” and felt this image was “a bad omen.” This in and of itself stressed that there was something that needed to be addressed, prompting:

Question: I am just wondering then, would you see imagery as being spiritual?

“Yeah! Everything represents something.”

“Yeah, especially that salamander, it was spiritual!”

“It was in [name of non-Aboriginal instructor] class.”

Anne went on to explain that the salamander is not common in their territory, and to see one is rare. Doty added that if one had been seen it was only on one side (referring

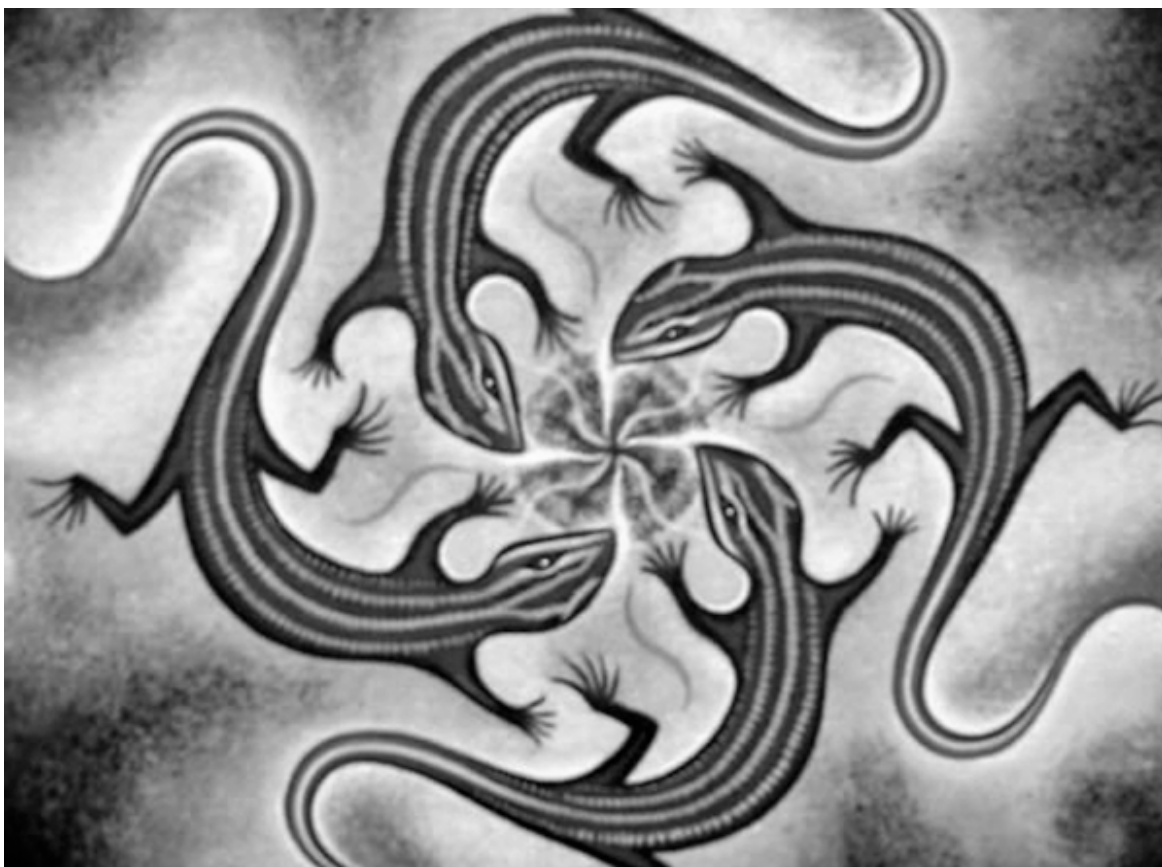


Figure 9. Salamander Art

Photo by Sue Vaughan. Artist Karen Coronado. From the 15th Annual NC American Indian Juried Art Exhibition Greensboro, North Carolina. Copyright 2005 by Sue Vaughan. Used with permission.

to Nishnawbe Aski territory). Despite intensity rising, and even with the earnest remarks, humour soon prevailed as Chrissy insisted, “Just tell them not to put a snake on there too!”

Please be reminded that the teacher candidates are from northern Ontario, Canada while the photo itself and artist hail from North Carolina, United States. Having said that, instructors who teach in communities with which they may be unfamiliar with, must realize and be aware all Aboriginal communities are not necessarily the same; often this is the misconception. Each Nation has its own understandings and teachings therefore things may be interpreted which may not have been their initial intention. Thence the facilitator really needs to understand that teachings and beliefs are also according to their geographical locales.

The above supported what authors Kaufman and Nickerson (2005) had duly noted: While it is possible to identify commonalities between the cultures of First Nations, Métis and Inuit, each nation has its own history, tradition, values, and language that are the foundations for a way of living and of knowing. Cultural diversity is amplified by geographic location and dispersion of communities. This rich diversity of Aboriginal societies and cultures is often lost on other Canadians, but is a source of strength, pride and identity that nurtures the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Canadians. (p.2)

I feel that the latter portion of this excerpt is what occurred regarding the imagery of the salamander and the non-Aboriginal instructor. As previously indicated, the teacher candidates are from remote northern Ontario communities in Canada while the artistry used by the instructor is from Greensboro, North Carolina in the United States. It would

seem apparent that the thought process here was because the caption said it came from an Indian art exhibition that it would then seemingly fit any Aboriginal community. This is a misconception as evidently demonstrated by participants.

This was exemplified too at the onset on my thesis of identifying who I was and where I originated from, and thereby too feel I must state that some participants of the Sharing Circle presented themselves in this manner as well. This acknowledged my full concern of leaving out portions of the transcription that includes segments of their Original language. It is my hope that the significance of such does not go overlooked, as a lot of Aboriginal Learners/Peoples have the desire to present themselves in this way as well. It may be of importance in declaring their originating clans and homelands, their true identity that the Creator gave them: the way of our Old Ones.

Location is family; location is identity; location is of vital importance.

Although my thesis is primarily meant to delve into imagery as situated within new technology and its impact within an Aboriginal setting, there is a piece I feel I must speak to as it correlates to the spirituality aspect that the participants too brought forth. During the planning for the courses that were delivered via *Elluminate Live*, there was an element that consisted of sending a syllabus to provide the information on the courses beforehand. The course guides were partially structured around a thematic scheme that would help in bridging content with cultural relevancy and relate ability. During this stage the instructors worked with me side by side discussing their course content and what animal as symbol would best convey and connect with their works to sate both worldviews. In the Introductory chapter under subsection My Connection, I stated that I did not know these were the students that the syllabus was made for; however, while I

was creating the imagery based upon each course I asked in ceremony for guidance, and upon doing so I was gifted with a message/words along with the vision/animal image which was meant directly for the teacher candidates. This initially was not my intention to include, but upon hearing the significance of spirituality and what the learners spoke to, I feel it necessary to acknowledge this in the findings as well.

The following is an example of one of the course's symbolic entity and words that I passed along (Figure 10).

This Vision/artwork, Hawk, was given to me accompanied with these words.

Hawk is Brother to Eagle. He too is a messenger, a visionary with observant eyes that watch the grounds below. He is a skilled hunter and is efficient: working smarter not harder. As teachers, as Hawk, you are in relation to Eagle, and taking children into your care as their teachers you become their guardian. The Winged Ones make us think of a higher purpose, a higher thinking, and a mental alertness, a freeing of the mind. Intellectual power.

These words and image were passed on to the teacher candidates and resonated within them by helping link the subject matter to a traditional way of thinking by making a connection with the natural world and their present positions and as future instructors.

Anne: "They referred to every theme that came up and how we connect with, so I thought it was good."

Question: So do you think that using imagery in that sense does make a difference and is a benefit to Aboriginal students when used in academic, like, in that learning environment?

Chrissy: "Yes," (agreeing from other participants), "I really enjoyed those



Figure 10. Artwork of Hawk.

Artwork created by Lyn Trudeau. Copyright 2010 by Lyn Trudeau. Used with permission.

inspirational [words] mostly they have on there and the meaning. It makes sense.”

As this was shared within the Circle, I smile as I realize that I had begun to connect to the teacher candidates even before I knew the direct association. I felt happiness and was respectful of the role I had played in acting as a conduit in delivering a message/words to my fellow Learners. Chi’Miigwech Gitchii manidoo.

Does the Delivery Mode of the Images and Technical Aspect of Elluminate

Live Act as a Barrier or Forge a New Pathway?

All Peoples of Turtle Island and beyond are journeying together in a time of immense technological changes. Changes occurring are affecting and will affect every person that is and will come to be upon Mother Earth. One of these changes, which I speak to particularly, is the Internet. There is an immediacy involved associated to this topic within educational spheres, as many educational institutions have and are on the verge of implementing programs and classes via the Internet.

Accessibility: Opening or Closing Doors?

There are then many paths within education and many doors that have been opened to many Peoples. Whether this doorway is inclusive to all is debatable. It is then not surprising that this element would come into play involving remotely located adult Aboriginal students situated within third generation distance education.

At first glance, universities offering this type of instruction in response to educational gaps within the Aboriginal populace are most apt to think that “opportunities offered by the new technology may in some respects be a particularly useful tool in creating opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to catch up with the rest of the population” (Fox, Jock, Nickerson, & Simon, 2004, p. 1). Opening the doors to students to take

ownership of the content being served and participating from an active position rather than passive will greatly change how one experiences academe. It is then we must take into account how this delivery mode is being received and worked through with this portion of teacher candidates as it pertains to their educational journeys. The teacher candidates themselves prompted that this searching process impelling both negatives and positives of accessibility should be addressed. The two main thematic barriers due to technology consist of prior computer skills and physical computer hardware that also involve the upkeep as well. Negative aspects must be acknowledged and experienced in order to move ahead to recognize and even be aware that there is a positive side of Internet instruction through software such as *Elluminate Live*. The basic positive element is this software providing a pathway for instruction that works for and with the adult Aboriginal Learners by way of incorporating all communicative means—not focusing primarily on a text-laden pedagogy. Without the bad, there can be no good.

Technology as a Barrier

Prior Computer Skills

Prior knowledge of and on computers is a factor that that must be taken into consideration even before third generation education can be brought into a learning environment where this has not been previously used. Not all the teacher candidates were confident in their computer skills, as Dotty states, “I only knew so much about computers in this program, I was hardly ever on a computer before.” Familiarity with computer systems, especially when the primary use of engagement is based on this type of instruction, with learners must first be identified. Despite this cohort of teacher candidates having been invited to a “sandbox” gathering offered by Brock University,

they still insisted that knowledge of the software and accessing the actual class were not adequate. The “sandbox” reference is metaphorical and is indicative of a time set up by Brock University wherein members of the research team exposed the learners, instructors, and researchers themselves to the *Elluminate Live* virtual environment. This initiative was meant to provide, namely the learners, with a sense of what the virtual classroom would entail. An example of what was covered was how to raise your hand, express emotion, ask questions, and other common classroom activities. It was meant to be a time of “playing” with the software and becoming acquainted with the tools and how to use them. All the teacher candidates were invited; however, not all joined the sandbox gathering because, for some, the time interfered with their own classroom scheduling and not everyone was available at the same time. It was not made clear if these particular teacher candidates had attended or not as they insisted that they needed more time to become familiar with the software to get the most out of the classes, and even though they indicated they did not have that many problems, they were not always able to properly and quickly navigate through the whole instructive process.

At the onset of the course, problems quickly began to arise with even accessing the online class due to the obstacle of logging in to more than one system. The learners were meant to log in to Brock University’s website, then onto Sakai (another point of entry within Brock University) to have access to *Elluminate Live*. Dotty stated, “I didn’t know how to log in because it had passwords after passwords.” Anne, agreeing affirmed Dotty’s efforts and Chrissy offered, “You know why we kept getting mixed-up with those sites? Because it says on brocku.ca, login ID, and then on Sakai, Brock ID--- like what is login suppose to be there?” Chrissy later added,

They kept changing it from Brock ID to password ID. There is too many different logins you have to do. That's why I get frustrated with Sakai right and then you have to go to the Brock site, campus ID or whatever it says. Then we call back again and they say--- they switched it around "You're supposed to use your Brock ID! Use your student number!" (Imitating the HelpDesk responses). Just getting all . . .

To help with access and to offer technical assistance, Brock University provided a direct phone line using a 1-800 number connecting Brock University's technology staff to the learners with the necessary help during the scheduled on-line class hours. Despite the university's efforts, not only was there still some confusion, but with the length of time associated to getting matters sorted, between Brock computer staff and teacher candidates, a significant amount of class time often had already been missed due to technical issues.

Chrissy: "You have to know what they are talking about because it is over the air. They kept changing it from Brock ID to password ID. There is too many different logins you have to do. That's why I get frustrated with Sakai right and then you have to go to the Brock site, campus ID or whatever it says" (other participants agree).

Question: Was the technical support helpful in helping you through that, in helping you resolving the proper IDs to go with which login?

Chrissy: "Yeah, pretty good."

Dotty: "It took a while."

How long a while?

Chrissy: “Half an hour!”

Really, eh? You would be with them a half an hour talking to them?

Chrissy: “Yeah.”

Another important point associated to prior computer knowledge that was made was terminology, as indicated by Anne.

Anne: “I think another problem we ran into was when we send in our assignments they told us turn it into ‘jpeg’, we don’t know anything about it (Anne starts laughing, other participants agree and laugh as well) because me when I started I wasn’t into computers that much I can’t even send an email . . . but there are some things that, like jpeg, that then they can’t open our assignments when we send them, so I don’t know.”

It was clear that the teacher candidates did not know some of the names of necessary file formats needed or even meant in order to save their files to send some of their assignments in for grading or sharing with others when it came to presenting their information. Taken from the above, the instructors assumed that the adult Aboriginal learners were as up to date as they were when it came to turning in and presenting their data for uploading to share with others on *Elluminate Live*. Prior computer knowledge accounts for not only familiarity but also the necessary terminology as it includes a whole vocabulary in and of itself.

Computer Hardware and Upkeep

There is a quote under the Accessibility subtitle earlier in this chapter pertaining to how new technology may allow Aboriginal Peoples to “catch up” to the rest of the greater populace. Ideally, yes, but if our remote Aboriginal communities do not even

have access to the necessary hardware, let alone the software, then statements such as this do not carry much weight. Notions such as quoted may not even be applicable if this portion of the populace cannot even begin to use and/or maintain computer systems because the physical computer hardware means are not being met, as Dotty first offers, “I don’t have a printer at home so she prints the stuff for me at the school and because I don’t have paper at home” (Anne and Dotty laugh).

Dotty further explains,

“But it’s just (two second pause) when something breaks you can’t just get it fixed just like that, you have to wait and wait for the parts, even for the headphone, there’s hardly anything in the store you have to order it and it takes time, maybe a week or two.”

So getting the necessary hardware is sometimes a challenge itself?

Dotty: “Yeah.”

Like your computer breaks down and you have to send it back to NNEC and you might not get it back for weeks?

Dotty: “Maybe a month.”

When the teacher candidates did begin this program, the NNEC provided them all with laptops to assist them in furthering their studies in distance education. However, the participants said on more than one occasion that their computers were out of date and stores were no longer carrying the parts associated to the older computer models. There is always an issue of cost associated with new technologies, and computer-mediated distance education is no different. With the teacher candidates relying on NNEC for the actual computer, the NNEC also does not have funding to keep upgrading their laptops.

In accordance with the computers being outdated and synchronous online instruction with software such as *Elluminate Live* it requires computers with the capacity to handle such information being presented all at once as Anne states, “if there wasn’t so much lag more people would have more success.”

Clearly there are issues when using this technical mode to inject imagery into the curriculum and technical malfunctions that need to be worked out.

New Pathway

“Despite the painful experiences Aboriginal people carry with them from formal education systems, they still see education as the hope for the future and they are determined to see education fulfill its promise” (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, 3:434).

Aboriginal culture needs to be supported within educational realms, especially when there are those amongst us who are relying on education to instill positive change for all our Peoples. Innovative venues such as virtual classrooms (*Elluminate Live*) just may be a constructive route to perpetuate these positive changes beginning with what and how we are educated. *Elluminate Live* now offers instructors the means to negotiate different pedagogies as this software incorporates all communicative means that resonate more with the Aboriginal learner. Anne had affirmed the illustrative element with, “we have to have something visual all the time . . . it reinforces whatever the teacher is trying to do.”

Elluminate Live was able to provide an overall more engaging environment for these learners as indicated when it was compared to previous education received through first- and second-generation distance education. Anne pointed out, “I don’t think we

could do any group work with radio, because that whiteboard thing we could have groups do group work.” This interaction amongst each other proved beneficial, as Chrissy adds, “with *Elluminate* you see the teacher and you can interact with others too on there.”

Being able to see and relate to a visible person was enjoyed as part of the third-generation features, as Chrissy noted, “And you’re still, I’m used to reading and teleconferencing, and you don’t have to see a teacher. It’s nice to see the teacher within *Elluminate Live*.”

These points are reflective in the literature review as it suggests that Aboriginal learners take pleasure working in groups and relating to an actual person. It seems this humanness mindset and connectivity crosses into the digital world as well.

Albeit these teacher candidates struggled in the beginning of receiving their online tutelages, the participants agreed that despite the initial intimidation and going through some growing pains they were up for the challenge and found that they actually liked it. Dotty offered, “I don’t mind using that *Elluminate Live*.” Chrissy acknowledged this with the same sentiments: “I don’t mind using that either, it is just that I had to help her when she was doing that *Elluminate Live* tour . . . we were helping each other because we wasn’t familiar with it,” adding, “It works well when you are familiar with it.”

Even with troublesome beginnings, the learners liked and adapted to it as Dotty went from “wanting to throw my laptop into my woodstove” to “For me it was okay. It was something new and I like it.” Anne supported the new mode of instruction by declaring, “I really think that this is a very good thing and we should pursue it.”

The next section of this research explores the significance and necessity of a caring and nurturing environment, which can be introduced by Chrissy as she states a key factor in why using *Elluminate Live* is welcomed and makes sense: “ Instead of travelling

so far to take courses and taking lots of time away from your job and family and your home.”

Support Systems

Towards the closing of the Circle participants shared an element, support systems, that echoed on a personal level amongst all. There were three key systems that came out of the research: support within the work environment, support for each other, and support for their home communities. This additional area was outside of the searching process but it proved to be a poignant issue in the participants’ stories, hence the need to bring it forth. They shared:

Support Within Their Work Environment

One participant in particular felt compelled to share this aspect of her emotive educational journey. Her efforts to pursue a higher level of education affected other aspects of her life, such as her very work environment. The courses offered through *Elluminate Live* were during employment hours and situated within these structures as all the stakeholders agreed to collaboratively do the pilot project together. Therefore when it came time to actually have the virtual classroom go live, it was essentially the teacher candidates’ authoritative counterparts that made the decision of whether it was possible to have the teacher candidate participate. Chrissy shared, “it is up to her, she approves or not whether I can go online” when telling of the interaction between herself and the principal at her school. She retold that at first her school was supportive of this plan but later,

You have your educational authority supporting you and helping you and your principal and whoever you’re working with—but you start tip-toeing around not to

have them yell at you or say anything, that's how I was starting to feel that too. I told my principal, I told her, "Can I just quit?" and she said "No!" (Chrissy laughs). "Because I was getting so frustrated with her, I couldn't get through her hard head."

The pivotal point of Chrissy's story, when referring to her principal, is her saying,

She couldn't see that she wasn't at the community level. She never lived in a reserve that's isolated like that and how much time and sacrifices that we make when we are the ones that live there all year round, and her, she just goes over for work and that's it.

Chrissy later continued,

My principal she made me feel like a failure, and I never want that feeling toward anybody—I don't want to feel hostility towards anybody, it is not in my nature to feel like that, but I was being put down and but I stood my ground (and then looking and speaking to the other participants went on to say), I am going to need your help when I go home from here that I will be able to continue participating in this program.

Chrissy came forward and spoke to grievances within her employment scenario, which namely was a result of taking classes during her scheduled work hours. This proved that this might not have been the best timing in which to offer the courses. Her words also speak to the concern of offering the classes where the learner may be under the influence of and watched by a superior. Thus a situation could possibly make room for a power issue to occur, as seen in Chrissy's case.

Despite the aforementioned, *Illuminate Live* courses did have a positive effect in all the participants' workplaces. When the participants were asked if the courses being

delivered in such a way assisted them at work they all agreed that they in fact were not as intimidated using computers as they previously were prior to the virtual classroom.

Support for Each Other as Fellow Students

A thriving supportive network had developed and continues to exist within the cohort of these adult Aboriginal learners and was evident in the sharing and camaraderie displayed amongst them. The teacher candidates portrayed not only mutual respect amidst the group but positive relationships that were nourished with first helping out with understanding the technology but then led into a cohesive thread of emotional supportiveness exhibited throughout their whole educational process.

Anne: “Me, when I started I wasn’t into computers that much, I can’t even send an email, it was the people who are in the course with me who taught me to do these things,”

The latter part of this quote tells how a group-oriented caring base created an emotional backdrop to their schooling as shared by Chrissy:

Whenever we do come together and somebody has a crisis we are always there for each other, we talk with them if they are having trouble with their work, we help them too, that is one thing I liked about that.

She later continued,

I really hope that we are making a difference by being here and somebody that needs help I am willing to give them any kind of help and support they need, whether they need a shoulder to cry on or need somebody to talk to or they want advice or if they want hands on help or ideas because basically, I do with the people I meet I ask them for help, and being able to help one another is a really

strong part of this program and trying to make it work and just having lots of support around you it really does help a lot.”

The above statements provide evidence that a nurturing environment was created and did not end at the conclusion of academic sessions but extended to a personal level as well. What is interesting, though, is that while this supportive networking had developed and been initiated within this particular set of students, it also carried over into the next cohort. These teacher candidates were not aware of who would be in the next cohort but nevertheless wanted to help and see them succeed in their studies as well. There is a facet of a whole relationship building that the teacher candidates reflected upon as they used this opportunity to try to get to know the university as well as the virtual system, Sakai, which is in place.

Chrissy said, like what we are getting from this program is we're getting to know Sakai and Brock University and how to navigate it and so everybody who is taking the program next cohort, there is somebody in (name of home reserve) we can talk to them and they can come and ask us how to work it, how to navigate it.

This way of thinking and living helps Aboriginal Peoples and communities move forward with the concept of supporting each other individually and as fellow learners. This idea flows directly into supporting and giving back to the whole community.

Support Own Communities

It would seem apparent that the teacher candidates placed a primacy on relationships and hope in their own futures as well as providing support to their community as a whole to strive for an overall state of well-being.

Chrissy said, I want to finish it, otherwise all this work I put into this program

means nothing and I want to show the people back home that education is important and that I want to be a role model to the younger kids and those people that have nothing to do at home. They think they are stuck there. Do something with their lives. And I am hoping to inspire people by doing this program and it helps when you have somebody in your own community that helping you and supporting you as well.

The Elder who sat in the Sharing Circle acknowledged that sharing done respectfully and mutually can benefit those doing the sharing as well as passing along knowledge gained.

It is going to be a whole new experience of something out there for others to appreciate and I guess when we walk our path it is never alone, we have always had some support from our family and friends and we can leave a kind of little trail, I guess, for others to be able to follow and I guess that is the sharing that happens and it sounds like the group has done a lot of sharing from the time that you have been together.

This is the old way, the good way, and the way to continuity of our culture and the very communities themselves.

Summary of Findings/Results

Upon the closing of the Sharing Circle I was able to reflect on the words given and themes that presented themselves. If there are truths that were illuminated from the above section it is that the power of imagery, new technologies, and accessibility to those new technologies cannot be left out of the conversation when discussing third generation education as it pertains to adult Aboriginal learners.

The imagery aspect cannot be ignored or taken for granted, as it was plainly

evident that it does affect teacher candidates. The teacher candidates connected culturally relevant imagery to a sense of pride and spiritualness that they did not fully recognize before. Alongside this, notably, was that teacher sojourners need to be mindful and aware that imagery that seemingly portrays Aboriginal Peoples graphically is not necessarily reflective of all our Nations. The teacher candidates brought forth just how much this leads into the importance of location and identity and how it mirrors, or not, our respective home territories. This piece needs constant nourishing as it may assist in bridging relations between Aboriginal Peoples and systemic institutions within an educative space.

The other components, as previously mentioned, that also need to be taken into account are technology and accessibility. Prior computer knowledge and skill set must be identified as the teacher candidates indicated that some of them were apprehensive when the course began. Not all of the learners had prior training and therefore were not confident due to lack of computer experience which then created unfamiliarity with computer-related jargon, let alone taking on a fully interactive course. With this, the actual physical hardware involved with implementing third generation instructional learning environments also has the potential to be problematic. The teacher candidates' computer equipment was not always up to date to meet the demands that new technologies require to operate smoothly as "the lag time" was often challenging because of these constraints. The funds for updated computers and time, in regards to getting repairs done, were not readily available to these remote Aboriginal communities; without the necessary hardware the software is redundant.

Finally, there was a significant finding that resulted from this searching process

that was not expected or initially sought, namely, the need for support systems.

Throughout the Sharing Circle, the teacher candidates openly shared how emotional support had a strong presence during the pilot project and the actual program itself appearing in their workplace, between fellow students, and for the future of their home communities. It was voiced that this type of support within the work environment is needed as tensions and lack of encouragement affected how one participant wanted to give up on the course due to power issues occurring.

Optimistically, though, emotional support systems played a role in assisting these learners throughout their overall learning process as positive support networks amongst them proved to be nurturing and motivating. This was evident at the onset of the program and carried on to the *Elluminate Live* pilot project, as there was certain level of uneasiness regarding the virtual classroom, but that quickly turned into the adult Aboriginal learners using this as a learning opportunity. I think it too worth stating how they worked through this environment both individually and collectively. The collective sharing and support-based learning environment created bled into their own communities as it was clear these teacher candidates spoke to wanting to give their newfound knowledge and give selflessly of themselves to future Aboriginal students yet to come.

These points indicate the new terrain that educationalists and Aboriginal communities need to take into consideration, as these respective parties now have to traverse this digital landscape to find a balance that will sate both the academy and needs of Aboriginal communities. The premise of relationship building, the value of these relationships, and support systems in Aboriginal communities was not overlooked and was even celebrated.

CHAPTER FIVE: COMING FULL CIRCLE: ACTION AND EARTH

ACTION that which started with Vision has now come full circle. Action is the final stage in making Vision a reality. It is here that we carry on with what we have learned throughout our journey. The Action piece thus becomes vital because it is what we, with the Vision, Relationships, Knowledge *do*. It is the manifestation of all quadrants of the whole circle that acknowledges Gitchii Manidoo for the insight to answers sought. Thus the concluding chapter is the Action portion of my thesis because we can now not only reflect on our journey but also give voice to the learning we now possess and even give recommendations for Brock University if they so choose to implement *Elluminate Live* or other software that is similar in structure.

EARTH is Mother and caregiver. She sustains and shelters all entities here on the physical world. Aboriginal Peoples have a strong connection to Her, as She is the very soil and rock underfoot in which we have embedded our emotions and histories since time immemorial. Earth gives us life and makes it possible for our very existence. She passes on our very culture through rocks and plants that She has given birth to, thereby keeping everything in connection. It is a time of acknowledging the past and moving forward with new knowledge and stories to tell. Let us carry this forth for those whose minds and hearts will hear us with all that we have acquired since the vision of our journey, allowing to Vision again—it brings us full circle. Earth in this regard is also suited for this chapter as it may bring closure to the research as situated within the context of my thesis but She also renews Herself and keeps Being, everchanging and standing throughout the times.

Speaking to Coming Full Circle

Our journey with *Elluminate Live*, teacher candidates and Brock University has now come full circle. Brock University's initiative ultimately challenges previous pedagogical constructs that have constrained Aboriginal learners. Within this research study it is mainly due to new technologies, such as *Elluminate Live*, offering various media including imagery that transcends the academy and is able to resonate with Aboriginal learners even on an emotive level. As such, there is disparity in the literature directly associated with adult Aboriginal learners, specifically teacher candidates, within research and education spheres involving the impact of imagery and third generation distance education.

Imagery: Friend or Foe?

Visual representations of a culture have always been a crucial connection with keeping the culture alive and thriving. A visual cue is a constant reminder of one's place within a society and the role associated therein, and it is for this reason that a positive portrayal and/or truthful portrayal at the very least be expressed. Counter to this, misrepresentation and nonrepresentation are culturally damaging when they occur. Misrepresentation allows for a voice to speak out of tune while nonrepresentation does not allow you to speak at all. This unfortunately has been the illustrative story of Indigenous Peoples in varying forms such as the cartoon Indian as sport mascot, the savage, wild Indian in film, to no actual portrayal at all, making the old adage *out of sight —out of mind* a reality.

The results chapter documents that successful involvement of imagery is dependent upon the context in which it is used as well as its source and the nature of its

perceived image. The ATC overall supported the positivity relevant imagery can have when it is appropriately representative of their culture. Educators within every classroom, virtual and non, must always ask themselves if the students see a clear reflection of themselves, thereby offering them a safe and welcoming place within the class, which in turn gives them something in which they can become invested.

Many Aboriginal scholars such as Battiste (1988), Hampton (1998), and Hodson (2004) indicate that for Aboriginal learners to be successful we are to take a holistic approach to education that consists of taking the Spiritual, Emotional, Intellectual, and Physical elements into consideration as an overall approach. Authors Kitchen, Hodson, and Cherubini (2011) specifically referred to these measures as Indigagogy—an Indigenous pedagogy. Thus, building curriculum and instructive strategies would need to reflect all four of these elements. If we are to adhere to this Indigagogy then we also need to take it to the level where not only text is seen as the primary source of instruction but imagery is also included to enable experiential learning.

In accordance, our Maori brothers and sisters of New Zealand asked, “How can we fuse our culture into the e-learning process?” (Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand, 2005, p. 21). This question seems appropriate within this context, as I too am examining new modes of educative processes and elements associated therein. Of interest to this research is previous literature directly associated to the virtual environment that has offered culturally sensitive graphical interface; therefore, we need to take the direct correlation between imagery and the adult Aboriginal learner. One answer to this question posed is evident within this searching process: imagery with our own artistry and portrayals. It needs to be supported by educational systems that

recognize that Indigenous Peoples have differing needs and teachings from one Nation to another, and the only way to ensure these needs are met is through guidance from the local community being served at that given time, hence offering an authentic ethnic element: friend. Conversely, there certainly can be misunderstanding and miscommunication if this authentic facet is ignored. We no longer can accept that what may house meaning, be symbolic, and of relevance to one Nation may hold the same reverence with and for all Indigenous Nations. It is from this place that there can be broken lines of communication, which in turn present the opportunity for people being offended, mistrust and negative feelings: foe.

Imagery must be understood for the venerated place it holds for keeping our stories and culture alive and passing along for future generations as evident throughout this searching process. Spirituality expressed and taken through/from imagery—learners such as the ATC should be given the opportunity to acknowledge and experience this in the classroom, as culturally appropriate portrayals can be a bridge back to our traditions and stories.

Whose Culture is it Anyway?

There is an assumption that e-learning is ‘a-cultural’ and the bias of the teacher is removed through the use of technology. E-learning professes to be learning that is anchored in the learner.”

(Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand, 2005, pg. 18)

It would seem that “assumption” is the key word in the above quote as we have seen in the results chapter, which indicates that e-learning can definitely be cultural. E-learning is still reliant upon someone preparing the content for delivery, so it is still a

matter of whose culture. Having said this, Indigenous Peoples must always be cautious yet of the curriculum and the way it is being disseminated. E-learning also does not necessarily mean use of visual and audio, as e-learning by definition is as long as it is being done electronically, thereby leaving the possibility of the sole source still being text-laden. *Elluminate Live* does provide visual, audio, and live exchange options, but that is all they are, options. It is still in the instructors' hands as to how they wish to present the content. This then is not an inevitable move forward for Aboriginal learners but only that of a different format. However, the potential of moving forward is certainly present as situated within this context.

Housed in the same critical report as mentioned above by Maori educationalists (Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand, 2005, p. 20) is, "We don't really have a choice. We can try, but in reality it is not easy to strike a balance. We need to work on information literacy – learners being able to look at material, and contextualise and evaluate it." This is in direct correlation to the works researched in this study, as I think that before Aboriginal learners go into a new movement that is beyond their usual discourse that they should be given instruction that would cover how to read and analyze everything they are being presented with and not taking it as all authoritative. Information literacy enables learners to think critically about the source of the content, and they can then use every experience as a learning opportunity.

Another issue that warrants mentioning in regards to the cultural aspect is basic realities of remote Aboriginal communities. Many of these remote Aboriginal communities are impoverished and often are more concerned with more essential needs rather than the implementation of new technologies within the community. I again reach

out to our Maori kin who shared: “Technology is no good if you can’t feed your kids. We’ve been in this space before. We don’t want to get into e-learning as the latest form of colonisation. We need to come together into a partnership” (Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand, 2005, p. 20). This could become problematic if we as whole communities are distracted and so concerned with basic fundamental needs in terms of physical survival that new ideologies and ways of life seep into our communities unnoticed and once again prey upon those unaware. However, the latter portion of this quote is positive in such a way that, provided we hold hands in partnership, we can come to a good place that will satisfy both worldviews.

Act of Resistance

There seems to be a common thread amongst Indigenous cultures that there is a fear of new technologies as a new form of colonization that will once again sweep across our lands. If we then can become a part of, understand, and incorporate our own selves and culture within such forces, this does not have to be the case. One such way of injecting our cultures and representation is imagery that speaks to the Indigenous Peoples in a good way. It would seem then that a respectful visual presence could be understood as an act of resistance—a mode of clearly depicting and telling who and what we were, are, and will always be. Resistance tends to be understood as a struggle or in a confrontational way; however, resistance in this context means celebrating and being joyful of our culture.

Imagery can play a role in resisting, such as demonstrated by the ATC. The ATC were compelled to voice their concern that the image used was understood, to them, as a bad omen. However, throughout the overall dialogue they were most welcoming to

images and visual representation used in the *Elluminate Live* programming, even suggesting that it gave them a sense of their culture and “a connection to the land.” The resistance then is reacting to the uneasiness that they feel yet using the same medium as a welcomed addition when used in a culturally spiritual manner.

I felt compelled to have a subtitle of resistance to speak to concerns rather than facing assimilation into yet another realm (technology) and integrate these tools to conform to our ways of thinking, thus allowing the users to partake in various learning by way of exposing them to various links that are not linear or bounded by ink and paper. Aboriginal learners, as previously mentioned, learn better hands on and through experience.

Reflection of Selfhood and Culture

Assimilation into the masses can be likened to the technology arena, as both can be interpreted as each partaking in the progression of total enculturation in their own way. The internet possessing such incredible communicable means has not come to visit or be a fashionable trend but is now a set norm embedded in the public domain along with housing the evils associated with fragmentation of society. Along with this, the output, and hard/software, if we are to implement said medium as an educational tool, it must be friendly to the Aboriginal user, particularly if it is presented in the fashion of plain type being the primary visual as opposed to a more aesthetically appealing image which would seemingly resonate more with an Aboriginal individual. It is that feeling of having seen yourself reflected in your environment which perpetuates a sense of welcoming and calmness.

Identity is significant to Aboriginal scholars and students in our chosen paths,

whether it is education or not, because we feel all things are interconnected and in relationship to each other. Seeing yourself and culture presented in a way that is inviting and embracing of both makes a vast difference; therefore, being given a space where you can make a connection and to which you can relate spills into how you envision your own selfhood. This idea of relationality is a common thread amongst Aboriginal scholars already situated in the academy, as S. Wilson says, “Relationality requires that you know a lot more about me before you can begin to understand my work” (2008, p. 12). An understanding of who we are and where we are from is of utmost importance within our communities and maybe even more so when we venture beyond familiar terrain. When we look out into our communities we are mirrored in many ways; we as Aboriginal people, need to in the very least catch glimpses of ourselves in other landscapes—education being one of them. Hence, when issues of new technologies and use of the Internet for educational instruction arise, will and can we still identify, or do we lose ourselves in this new realm?

Cultural Survival Through Spirituality and Adaptability:

Stay Rooted or Sow New Seeds?

After thoughtful deliberation on whether we as Aboriginal Peoples potentially lose ourselves, two answers appear out of the data collected and the research project as a whole: Spirituality and Adaptability. Aboriginal Spirituality has always played a significant role when discussing our next generations, and defining the place in which they will have to reside in and out of our classrooms or, in this case, virtual classrooms does not escape this query. At the forefront of the above question being asked is taking into consideration our history and our epistemic belief systems. We, as Aboriginal

Peoples, have a connection to the land and feel we need to keep a kindred spirit alive with our Mother Earth. Can we incorporate and carry this link to a computer-based environment? Because being of land-based culture wherein everything comes forth and returns to the land, do we stay rooted stemming from these traditional ways of knowing? Or do we reach for new venues in which to transcend our teachings and disseminate education offered through the new media? Many questions are still being raised, hence the essential need for further research. We, as Aboriginal Peoples, need to address these questions before someone answers for us.

Spiritualness must be recognized and taken into consideration if an educationalist wants to earn the trust and thus further the learning experience with Aboriginal learners—as depicted in the outcome of the salamander example in the findings. It seems apparent that most educators realize and understand the Indigenous People’s worldview of connectivity of all things and what is considered a land-based culture; however, as K. Wilson (2003) states, “relationships to the land do not just exist solely on the ground but also in the minds of individuals” (p. 89), thus declaring there is more than merely the physical connection to the land. Also, Aboriginal culture has always relied upon spiritual guidance and ceremony as Dr. Emily Faries, *Cree*, noted, “The core of Aboriginal culture is spirituality; Aboriginal people have always been a spiritual people. Prior to contact, their governance and education systems were built on their spirituality. The foundation of spirituality was paramount to all that they did (Faries, 2008, p. 2). Spirituality is of significance even in today’s education systems as voiced by the Aboriginal teacher candidates themselves.

Mainstream education systems have changed considerably and now are of a new classroom—the virtual classroom that knows no geographical boundaries. Upon realizing that our Peoples now are dealing with new technologies even within education, and with the next generation already being flooded with contemporary modes of communication we must remain like the branches of a tree and remain flexible in order to not lose our children yet again. This time it will not have to be a physical separation that begins it all; it will already be present in our very homes. Having said that, Wenger-Nabigon expressed, “Culture is pliable, influenced over time and space by multiple factors” (Wenger-Nabigon, 2010, p. 156). Given this statement we can see that there is room for change that does not necessarily speak from a positive or negative view—just change.

Traditional practices of stories and storytelling have long since told Aboriginal People’s histories and been the basis of various instruction even within our educative space. “We have been telling stories for generations. And as the medium for telling our stories changes somewhat over time, so too does the form, shaping and telling of our stories reflect the differences of the spaces we now occupy” (Baker, 2005, p.113). Baker in this statement acknowledges we have changed somewhat due to cultural influences, and our educational realm is no different. The venue and medium have changed, and software such as *Elluminate Live* may assist Aboriginal Peoples by way of making use of all sensory instead of text-laden pedagogy. The traditional argument for not abiding or adopting new technological advances is as Archibald states that “the impact of a story from oral performance, aural reception, and visual contact between teller and listener lessens when the story is transferred to the printed page. Some may feel that the life force

of the story has disappeared” (Archibald, 2008, p. 148). Perhaps with the inclusion of symbols, imagery, colours, and even live one-on-one interaction, these elements will breathe life back into the story and, in this context deliver an education that will house the required needs of the Aboriginal learner.

Throughout all the various media, modes of instruction, and curriculum Aboriginal Peoples must remain rooted in the rich spiritual histories as well as move forward through taking control of the media, instruction, and curriculum that is given for us to work with. By doing so, we can adapt the greater society’s tools but be the ones wielding the power these “tools” possess, thereby sowing new seeds. Now having said that, I believe the answer lies within finding that voice which lends itself to balancing both: staying rooted and sowing new seeds.

Sharing Circle Revisited

When I began this searching process, I had the hopes of remaining as true to my cultural teachings and ceremonies as I possibly could. Since I was not the primary investigator of the whole endeavour, much of the logistics were already in motion, namely the method in which information would be gathered. Initially I felt comfortable and felt that Sharing Circle, as methodology, would be culturally sensitive and fitting, especially as the participants were of Aboriginal descent. However, upon completion of my research, I feel I must revisit the Sharing Circle as the vehicle for data collection: I have grave concerns and unease using Sharing Circle in this manner and essentially in a research project altogether. I fully understand that Sharing Circles have been used in previous research, and I do not mean any disrespect, as these are my feelings and personal view based on teachings I have been given.

My teachings of a Sharing Circle are that it is sacred moments held only for those in attendance because what is being shared is meant only for them. The words given and shared are intended for their ears and hearts. They are meant to take what they need and leave the rest. So I question: Is the true meaning and sacredness of a Sharing Circle lost when used as a vehicle for data collection? Is this now simply a means to an end of gathering data? Should I negotiate Spiritual matters? In this same frame of mind, I was privileged to hear Graham Smith (please see literature review) speak at the American Education Research Association Conference (AERA) in 2010. He spoke to his ideas of Indigenous research, saying let us speak in our longhouses and traditional communities and relay the information to those who seek it. I am more inclined to this way of thinking so that we as Indigenous Peoples, not only across Turtle Island but all Mother Earth, can maintain and keep intact our cultures, our ceremonies, and control of education that we, by various governments, are mandated to learn.

It seems to me people of varying backgrounds forget and do not pay the mindfulness to the actual meaning and sacredness of the Sharing Circle. The absolute second the Sharing Circle becomes something else, then it is just that, something else, and no longer a Sharing Circle as understood in the traditional sense. This something else is merely a means of data collection. "Using Circle in Eurocentric contexts can be a negative, hurtful thing" (Graveline, 2000, p. 365). I then become fearful of cultural appropriation and using Circle simply as a means to an end of doing research within our communities. There is a spiritual quality and energy shared within a Sharing Circle that should not be exploited and/or used for purposes other than its original intention. This has

been my teaching and therefore my inner struggle with the need to do research in a good way and questioning at what cost.

In accordance with the above, the analysis segment of any research based on Sharing Circle too troubles me. The pulling apart and analyzing the words and emotions given in a good way breaks the sacrosanct character of the whole spiritual gathering. The idea of having a Circle is physically illustrative of a natural flowing process often intended in a healing sense that is not meant to be broken.

Recommendations

Honouring the adult Aboriginal teacher candidate's voices was an imperative element of my thesis; therefore I bring forth their own words as guidance and direction as it pertains to using imagery and successful third generation education in our communities. Upon doing so, I will then share recommendations that I observed as the outcome of this process: collaboration that consists of community involvement, partnering with Indigenous artists, while overall providing and being consistent with supportive student networks.

Adult Aboriginal Teacher Candidates

These participants stressed that from the onset of the program a more descriptive package with visuals would be very helpful. Along with image-based information packages prior to getting started, the participants suggested that miniworkshops would too have been helpful to better prepare students as well as providing easier access to fully interact with the educational instruction being given. As previously stated, some of these learners had limited knowledge of computer usability let alone a full-on interactive course in which they were meant to send in completed work and assignments often

incorporating elements that they had no previous instruction in (namely assignments that included imagery). They offer these words:

Chrissy: I think that is what we should do in the first year of their . . . of the next cohort is teach them that aspect so they can start using it right away, Brock site and Sakai.

Investigator: Instead of bringing in Sakai at a later time when you're already into the course?

Chrissy: Yes. That way it will be easier for them to have someone to run a computer course or even do a day in instruction to brought them down to Minnitaki to have somebody there to do that orientation, I guess you could call it.

Investigator: Yeah, just like a miniworkshop, get everyone on it, logged in.

Chrissy: I think that would have been better for us too if they did that for us.

Anne: And some kind of information package put together would help too . . .

Chrissy: In detail.

Investigator: Do you think that information package would help?

Anne: . . . Yeah.

Investigator: . . . what to expect, to see on your screen and when you encounter that what to do?

Anne: Yeah, because we didn't have anything like that to help us along.

Chrissy: Or what the page is supposed to look like.

Investigator: So you, I guess what I am hearing is that you really respond to the visual, that has been a great help and would be had you had it more, had a pamphlet to help navigate through?

(Yes, amongst participants) with Dotty adding, “It’s just that first time I didn’t know how to log in because it had passwords after passwords.”

The first recommendation put forth by the teacher candidates was information packages that were visually oriented and detailed, thereby not leaving room for a learner to stray or have to do any guesswork when it comes to navigating the virtual environment. Some of the information sent out to the learners had culturally appropriate images embedded within (Chapter Four – spiritual words given with the thematic animal), but the teacher candidates also wanted images of what they were to encounter perhaps given in the way of screen shots of the actual software. This added feature would help stave off anxiety felt when using and logging into the first and subsequent sessions of using this type of instruction.

The other recommendation was offering workshops to assist in familiarizing and engaging the students within the virtual environment beforehand, as the participants said this would assist in making the transition flow more smoothly. Right before *Illuminate Live* commenced there was an optional virtual “sandbox” orientation; however, the teacher candidates wanted and/or needed to have a more human experience explaining and giving them hands-on instruction and guidance. Therefore, the idea of having someone personally deliver an orientation session was voiced.

There too seemed to be a level of frustration as it pertained to accessibility. The experience of logging in more than once was off-setting to the teacher candidates, as Dotty offered, “I didn’t know how to log in because it had passwords after passwords.” Chrissy further explained,

You know why we kept getting mixed-up with those sites? Because it says on brocku.ca, login ID, and then on Sakai, Brock ID . . . like what is login suppose to be there? Then we call back again and they say they switched it around “You’re supposed to use your Brock ID! Use your student number!” (imitating the HelpDesk responses). Just getting all...” [Chrissy’s voice trailing off].

The confusion then stems from having numerous access points where one access location would benefit Aboriginal teacher candidates as the participants spoke to the frustration as a result of having to log in repeatedly.

What I Now Offer

Upon having the pleasure of having sat along with and listened to our teacher candidates share their varied experiences on how imagery and technology are resonating and developing within our communities, I feel compelled to give voice to how I understand what I have witnessed. The three facets I saw emerge in accordance with the above were local community involvement, adhering to consultation with Indigenous artist(s) who is/are able to provide culturally appropriate imagery, while providing supportive student networks. All stakeholders involved in such endeavours need to work collectively and as close as possible to maintain transparency as well as being mindful of what is in the learner’s and communities best interest. It would seem these must be attended to when using imagery and new technologies, such as *Illuminate Live*, within an Aboriginal community.

Local Community Involvement

First and foremost, I feel that educational institutions that wish to implement such initiatives that are technology based should go directly to the whole community that is to

be involved and seek counsel before even introducing anything new that differs from practices already in place. At the commencement of the overall research project there was some community discussion; however, the local communities involved need to be made fully aware that this is not just a mode to relay educational instruction as understood in academic circles but that once this type of new technology is unleashed it has the potential to transform whole lifestyles. This concept has been well explored in the literature review with the likes of notable scholar McLuhan—the medium is the message. This is also in line with Aboriginal communities needing to have a foundation built on trust namely due to historic educational practices as also indicated in previous text. I think an effort such as this would be greatly appreciated and more apt to be heard and readily implemented upon allowing the whole community's input to be taken into consideration: having a voice in regards to a new mode being put in place as many of our communities are presently struggling with technological advancements taking over traditional practices. If/when new technologies are to be brought into our communities we must think of the repercussions and consequences that will result—allowing ample time for Aboriginal communities to consult and reflect within their own circles before going ahead and weaving such initiatives into familiar and practiced lifestyles.

The mindfulness of first bringing initiatives to the whole community to see if this, in fact, is what they want will also permit our Peoples to have a voice in the content and delivery modes, thereby ensuring Aboriginal People's learning styles are incorporated. This whole notion is in line with Facey (2001, p. 121): “Local people who will be the beneficiaries of the ‘development’ must be involved in the decision-making process from the beginning and at all planning stages, through testing, implementation, and

evaluation.” To further reap the benefits of coming together it is necessary to keep positive and not dwell on histories that were not productive; granted we do need to acknowledge past injustices, just not to keep living in that mindset. Therefore working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities, especially in an educative space, would be of benefit to all involved. Teaching and learning, learning and teaching: narrowing the cultural gap.

Culturally Appropriate Visuals

A main component of my thesis was the imagery and the significance of incorporating the visual into the content. As previously discussed, a majority of the images provided were a result of consultation with Indigenous artistry, and the images used were the outcome of these meetings. However, I feel all instructors should not only be mindful of this approach but also adhere to it during all virtual sessions. The fallout from not holding fast to this and using what they perceive as culturally sensitive visual representations can be damaging to the learning environment, as we have read in Chapter Four. Honouring our own representations will deter facilitators from venturing into uncharted waters and drowning themselves in ignorance, thence allowing negativity to seep in.

Supportive Student Networks

The outpouring of emotion shared by our teacher candidates expressed a defining feature: supportive student networks. Although this facet was not initially sought, we must acknowledge that these teacher candidates found a nurturing environment to be an element vital to finding success through third generation education. All stakeholders

involved within this type of educative space need to take the responsibility and be mindful of keeping the learners' interest and success a priority.

Professional colleagues of the teacher candidates must be careful to time allotted and required for the teacher candidates to maintain involvement with their synchronous studies. Open lines of communication between the university, instructors and the places of work would allow for teacher candidates to attend the on-line classes without any conflict resulting from the required time spent in the virtual classroom. Knowing in advance would allow for necessary arrangements to be made well beforehand with backup plans if not able to within the specified blocks of time. Along with this, I think it would benefit all participatory persons in the virtual environment including Brock University technical support staff to attend cultural sensitivity workshops. They must be fully aware they are dealing with learners of a different epistemic belief system and their approach to education as whole may differ from that of the dominant populace.

The idea of an overall supportive network reflects Voyageur (2001); "Having an appropriate experienced student support network in place is essential" (p. 111). A network covering all aspects of the educational journey is necessary and not one that is designed solely around the learner's academic setting/classroom.

Further Research/Study

The research within the scope of my thesis does not presume to envelop all that needs to be addressed involving imagery and third generation education as it pertains to adult Aboriginal teacher candidates. It essentially begins to address the impact and effectiveness of visual portrayals and graphics within a virtual environment and assessing the potential for third generation distance education within remote Aboriginal

communities through software, *Elluminate Live*. The combination of both also presents the whole idea of pursuing further study towards e-pedagogy as a whole, thus leaving room for future study to further delve into this grand field not yet fully traversed.

The areas that still necessitate dialogue specific to Aboriginal communities not covered within this searching process are use of specific colours, the whole idea of symbolism, and artistic style. Some of these aspects were touched on herein; however, it did not cover the great expanse of the aforementioned. All may play a significant role. Colours relay meaning within some Aboriginal teachings and carry as much weight as the visual itself. Therefore, inquiry into how facilitators choose to implement and be cautious of when and where to use certain colours too may impact the learners. Symbols of our past, as indicated in the literature review, resonate deeply within our communities and are still ever-present. It would be most interesting to see how these symbols and depictions can be incorporated within an educational setting alongside the Indigenous Peoples of these lands to see if the use of these depictions would too be helpful as an instructional tool. Even artistic style deserves recognition, as this too speaks to place of origin and distinctive expression. Perhaps then a study done specifically addressing these facets would be beneficial to Aboriginal learners on which to base future research.

The idea of implementing new technologies within our communities is also an area that merits conversation, especially within the educational realm. This topic, in fact, raises many concerns in communities, as it is a whole new way of communicating, thereby affecting lifestyle. Communication is the connection between all of us on Mother Earth collectively, and if using the ever-evolving technical venues as a means of communicating even for educational purposes, we then must ask: Is this what the local

communities want? Is it more detrimental as it pertains to preserving traditional values? The idea of ushering in a whole new way of doing things that will affect the future of our Indigenous communities must be brought to the table before we feast at it.

Illuminate Live and Brock University Now

Brock University initially partnered with the software company *Illuminate Live* in pursuit of furthering third generation education as associated with adult Aboriginal learners. I think it important for us to see if there is a future in the connection that was made amongst all counterparts by now looking where each is now.

Illuminate Live in August 2010, along with another online technology based software company, *Wimba*, was acquired by *Blackboard* to become *Blackboard Collaborate* and no longer exists as a sole entity. As *Illuminate Live* has been integrated into *Blackboard Collaborate*, it is not known if the relationship with Brock University will continue within this capacity, as this pilot project was undertaken when *Illuminate Live* was a stand-alone company. It remains to be seen if there will be further alliances made with other companies that house software that potentially has the power to transcend varying pedagogy.

Brock University presently is not offering classes through software *Illuminate Live* per the above, although, it is not clear if the above explanation is the only reason the Faculty of Education (FOE) at Brock University has not approached another computer software company making greater use of imagery as a main component of its pedagogy. Presently the FOE has discontinued the practice of allowing an Aboriginal artist to work with its Aboriginal research centre as a means of representation for our Original Peoples.

It was deemed not necessary to have a sole dedicated artist to work in this capacity. It is my hope that evidence provided herein will keep this door open for reconsideration.

After the pilot project, the Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education continues to offer this course through distance education but at this time uses video conferencing. Despite video conferencing still done through the internet and able to be used synchronously, it is not as interactive and diverse in the features and characteristics in comparison to what is identified as a fully interactive third generation distance education instructive tool.

Conclusion

This work was:

Born of Vision ...

Nurtured in Relationships ...

Rooted in Knowledge ...

Passed on through Action ...

I felt my thesis needed to be an authentic representation of myself and how I, as an Aboriginal person, pursue research; therefore, I situated and presented my work in a format embedded in my ancestral ways: Medicine Wheel teachings. This was also necessary as the topic surrounded Aboriginal communities and to exemplify and follow through in a culturally appropriate manner.

Overall it would seem apparent that the Indigenous population worldwide is in varying stages of utilizing ICT in educational learning environments. The overarching vision that guided our journey was questioning whether imagery through third generation distance education affected the learners in a virtual classroom setting. Studies have

already been revealing that imagery is a key factor; however, it is important to note *why* the element of imagery is crucial.

I feel compelled to again state, “Location is family: location is identity: location is of vital importance” (Chapter Four). Imagery brings this statement to life, as imagery is all these things. Imagery has the power to connect and the power to disconnect. Imagery evokes a spiritual component that can no longer be set apart from that of education if we are meant to remain true to the whole idea of holistic education. It had been pointed out to me that Spiritualness often does not get painted into the picture because it brings the potential for uncomfortableness. However, if education wants to enter into the Aboriginal realm of whole experiential learning, then when educating the Aboriginal learner this too must be addressed.

This study benefits not only research circles but also our own teachers in classrooms within our communities: Teacher candidates realizing how imagery affected their learning process as well as how they negotiate imagery into their own curriculum when they lead a classroom of our children. Imagery has the potential to heal and wound, as was evident in the case of misrepresentation. They too can be mindful of effects of technology in an educative space and perhaps start preparing the next generation for differing modes of instruction.

At this time, I call upon Eber Hampton’s, *Chickasaw Nation* (2008) words again: *If education is the new buffalo then Internet technology is the new horse. We just don’t know how to use it yet.* (p. 2)

So I too ask: Is *Elluminate Live* one way of harnessing this metaphoric horse? The internet and advancing technologies are not passing trends, as they have become

entrenched in practically every society, and if not, then it is on the horizon. Hampton's, (2008) quote has been prophetic in nature, and we do need to harness this horse and the elements associated within educative purposes and use them to meet our needs and serve our purposes in order to survive within the greater functioning society.

Norval Morrisseau, *Ojibway Nation*, also spoke to this research:

My paintings are icons, that is to say, they are images, which help focus on spiritual powers, generated by traditional belief and wisdom. (Morrisseau, n.d.)

Spiritual expression/representation through imagery and art has always had a place of reverence within Indigenous communities. Therefore if we are to take a holistic approach to education as defined by other Indigenous scholars that have forged the path before me, we absolutely need to embrace the idea of imagery and culturally appropriate visuals. I hope my thesis will contribute to the scarce literature on Aboriginal imagery as associated within virtual classrooms and technological advances and thereby perhaps studies of e-pedagogy itself. It is also my hope that other searchers will pick up and/or build on what has been presented here, allowing the visioning process to begin again . . .

Sage is still burning in my smudge bowl and the smoky haze and sweet scent is ever drifting . . . this pleasant aroma always awakens my Spirit . . .

Chi'miigwech, Gitchii Manidoo—Many thanks, Great Spirit.

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Appendix A

Text of Harper's Residential School's Apology

THE CANADIAN PRESS

June 11, 2008 at 5:23 PM EDT

OTTAWA — Text of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's residential schools apology

Wednesday: Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools.

The treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history.

In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools.

Two primary objectives of the residential schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.

These objectives were based on the assumption aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

Most schools were operated as ‘joint ventures’ with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United churches.

The government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities.

Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities.

First Nations, Inuit and Metis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools.

Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools – these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children and their separation from powerless families and communities.

The legacy of Indian residential schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.

It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered.

It is a testament to their resilience as individuals and to the strength of their cultures.

Regrettably, many former students are not with us today and died never having received a full apology from the government of Canada.

The government recognizes that the absence of an apology has been an impediment to healing and reconciliation.

Therefore, on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians, I stand before you, in this chamber so central to our life as a country, to apologize to aboriginal peoples for Canada's role in the Indian residential schools system.

To the approximately 80,000 living former students, and all family members and communities, the government of Canada now recognizes that it was wrong to forcibly remove children from their homes and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, in separating children from their families, we undermined the ability of many to adequately parent their own children and sowed the seeds for generations to follow and we apologize for having done this.

We now recognize that, far too often, these institutions gave rise to abuse or neglect and were inadequately controlled, and we apologize for failing to protect you.

Not only did you suffer these abuses as children, but as you became parents, you were powerless to protect your own children from suffering the same experience, and for this we are sorry.

The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long. The burden is properly ours as a government, and as a country.

There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential schools system to ever again prevail.

You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey.

The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly. We are sorry.

In moving towards healing, reconciliation and resolution of the sad legacy of Indian residential schools, implementation of the Indian residential schools settlement agreement began on September 19, 2007.

Years of work by survivors, communities, and aboriginal organizations culminated in an agreement that gives us a new beginning and an opportunity to move forward together in partnership.

A cornerstone of the settlement agreement is the Indian residential schools truth and reconciliation commission. This commission presents a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian residential schools system.

It will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.

God bless all of you and God bless our land.

Appendix B

Coyote Goes to School

Heather Harris (2002) p. 194–196.

Coyote was once again fed up with running around all day in the hot sun for a few scrawny gophers and rabbits. Dirt up his nose, dirt in his eyes, and what for? Barely a mouthful. Coyote had tried getting food at the supermarket one time like the Human People do but he got the shit kicked out of him for that. So, once again, he went to his brother, Raven, to ask him for advice. Coyote said, "Raven, there's got to be an easier way to get fed. I tried the supermarket—got beaten up. Tried to get money from welfare but came up against the Devil's Spawn in a K-Mart dress. Nothing's worked so far. You got any other ideas?"

"Well," Raven said thoughtfully, "the White Humans seem pretty well fed and they say that the key to success is a good education. Maybe you could go to school."

"Hmmm," Coyote mused, "maybe I'll try it. Couldn't hurt."

Well, Coyote went off to the city to the university because that's where Raven said adults go to school.

In a few days Coyote was back.

"Well my brother," Raven inquired, "did you get your education?"

"Not exactly," Coyote replied, "education is as hard to get as a welfare cheque. To get an education like the teachers at the university takes at least 10 years—that's a Coyote's entire lifetime-and, in the end, you don't get paid much anyways."

"When I got to the university they asked me what program I was in. I didn't know so they sent me to this guy who told me about the programs. I kinda liked the idea of biology—if I learned more about gophers maybe they'd be easier to catch. I liked the idea

of engineering—maybe I could invent a great rabbit trap. But in the end I settled on Native Studies. Now that's something I can understand—I've known those guys for thousands of years, even been one when it suited me."

"So I went to my Introduction to Native Studies course and, can you believe it, the teacher was a white guy? Now how much sense does that make? I saw native people around town—any one of 'em has got to know more about native people than some white guy."

"When I asked this guy what Indian told him the stuff he was saying. He said none—he read it in a book. Then I asked who the Indian was who wrote the book. And he said, it wasn't an Indian, it was a white guy. Then I asked him what Indian the guy who wrote the book learned from and the teacher got mad and told me to sit down."

The next day I went to my Indians of North America class. I was really looking forward to meeting all those Indians. And you know what? There was another white guy standing up there and not an Indian in sight. I asked the teacher, "Are we going to visit all the Indians?" He said, No. So I asked him, "How are we going to learn about Indians then?" And he said, just like the other guy, from a book written by a white guy. So I asked him if I could talk to this guy who wrote the book and the teacher said, "No, he's dead."

"By then, I was getting pretty confused about this education stuff but I went to my next class—Indian Religions. And guess what? When I went in, there wasn't another white guy standing up at the front of the room—there was a white woman!"

"I sat down and I asked her, 'Are we going to the sweatlodge?' 'No.' 'Sundance?' 'No.' 'Yuwipi?' 'No.' Then how are we going to learn—no wait, I know—from a book

written by a dead white guy! I'm starting to get the hang of this education business."

"So then I go to my Research Methods class thinking I've got it figured out. In this class the teacher (you've got it—another white guy) said that our research must be ethical, that we must follow the guidelines set out by the university for research on human subjects. The rules are there, my teacher said, to protect the Indians from unscrupulous researchers. Who made these rules I asked—you guessed it—a bunch of white guys. They decided we need protecting and that they were the ones to decide how best to protect us from them. So I told my teacher that I wanted to interview my father. The teacher said, you've got to ask the ethics review committee for permission. What?! I've got to ask a bunch of white guys for permission to talk to my own dad? That can't be right. I was confused all over again."

"So I sat down and thought about all this for a long time. Finally I figured it out. If white guys teach all the courses about Indians and they teach in the way white people think, then to find Indians teaching the way Indians think, all I had to do was give up Native Studies and join the White Studies program!"